

The experiences of Norwegian students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language

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Abstract

It has been documented that the achievement in foreign language learning builds on the native language skills (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). Therefore, it may be assumed that students with dyslexia will face challenges in the process of foreign language learning (ibid). These difficulties are frequently accompanied by emotional factors, such as low self-esteem, lack of motivation or high level of anxiety (ibid).

The current study presents the voice of students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language. The main goal was to get an insight into how the students perceive their learning situation concerning the particular areas of the English language that pose most challenges, the emotional responses to these difficulties, and the perception of the role of their English teachers in shaping their learning experiences and impacting on learning achievement. To get the answers to the study questions, the research utilized semi-structured interviews with six participants from secondary schools who had the statement of dyslexia. For the purpose of the data analysis the phenomenological approach and hermeneutics were combined.

The findings revealed that the participants experienced a range of difficulties in their learning process. The most common areas of the English language which they found challenging were fluent reading and comprehension, spelling and memorizing new information.

The data showed that the emotional responses did not relate directly to the difficulties in learning, but were the reaction to the way the teachers addressed these difficulties through their pedagogical decisions. The students related to specific pedagogical accommodations that they expected from their English teachers in order to succeed in the English classroom, feel motivated and keep positive attitude and low anxiety in learning. The central theme that emerged from the students' perceptions of their English teachers was the lack of understanding which consequently was reflected in the important pedagogical decisions and attitude of the teachers.

Keywords: *dyslexia; foreign language learning; the English language, students' perspective; emotional factors; teacher's pedagogy*

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*“I explain that being dyslexic is like running a 100-meter track race.
In my lane I have hurdles, but no one else does.
I have this feeling that it's unfair that I'm the only one with hurdles
but don't know how to explain it.
Soon the feeling leaves me as the starting gun shoots and I take off running.
I try running like the other classmates,
because we have all had the same education on how to run.
But then I hit the first hurdle and fall flat on my face.
My parents and teachers are yelling at me from the sidelines “try harder,
the other kids are making it down the track ok, you must be lazy or slow”.
Pulling myself up I try running faster and fall even harder after hitting the next hurdle.
Then someone takes the time to show me how to run hurdles and like an Olympic hurdler,
I outrun the other classmates.
The key, though, is that I have to do it differently,
the way that works best for me.
Learning is like a tailored suit; it takes a while and is unique to everyone.”*

Sagmiller (2005, as cited in Thapa, p. 23)

Abbreviations

FLL- Foreign Language Learning

LCDH- Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis

PGST- Psycholinguistic Grain Size Theory

FL- Foreign Language

Foreword

I would like to express my gratitude to the participants of this study for their time and for sharing their personal experiences.

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Tamar Tabakhmelashvili, for her patience, understanding and guidance without which I would not be able to complete this thesis.

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1 Introduction

1.1 General introduction

Reading and writing are among the central skills that people need in order to fully participate in the society and be a part of its culture. They accompany our life from the very early years through bedtime stories read by our parents, then becoming one of the critical predictors of school success, and finally being among the central skills used in most of the professions we choose. Therefore, the undeniable importance of developing reading and writing competence from the very beginning of one's education has been on the spotlight of the educational systems around the world and formulated in educational laws.

However, not every child finds it equally easy to learn the first letters and become successful at developing literacy skills. Children with specific learning difficulties, like dyslexia, may struggle considerably to perform a reading or spelling activity which for others would seem easy and obvious (Nijakowska, 2010). Even more difficulties may be expected when they are confronted with a new language system. It has been documented that foreign language learning builds on the native language aptitude (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). Consequently, it may be expected that students with dyslexia will find foreign language learning a challenging enterprise (*ibid*).

However, increasingly more significance has been given to secondary factors in foreign language achievement. These are the factors that together with language aptitude can either contribute to or impede language success (Krashen, 1985; Stampoltzis & Plychronopoulou, 2009; Ganschow, Sparks & Javorsky, 1998).

In this thesis the attention will be given to self-esteem, motivation, attitudes and anxiety, as the examples of these affective variables and their relationship with learning achievement, as seen from the students' point of view. The language under investigation was the English language, which has been recognized as one of the most difficult languages to learn for people with dyslexia (Everatt & Reid, 2009).

1.2 Norwegian context

The international PISA rapport measuring differences in reading skills between students from OECD countries showed in 2006 that 29% of Norwegian boys and 15% of girls were having reading difficulties (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2007). In average it gives the number of 22 % of school children, which is quite high a figure. The rapport from 2009 revealed the same low result as the one from 2000, when the reading level of Norwegian students was the lowest from all the OECD countries that took part in the assessment (PISA Rapport, 2009). These alarming results may imply the need for some changes in the educational system and this has been one of the priorities of Norwegian educational system in the recent years. As a response to the results from 2001, an intervention plan called “Gi rom for lesing!” (“Make space for reading!”) was introduced in years 2003-2007, and among the main goals it was supposed to develop the pleasure and motivation for reading among children, guide teachers in developing the strategies for teaching reading, and increase the awareness of the importance of reading among students (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2003).

In the abovementioned project, the factors that foster and hinder learning were presented. The variables that are positive for learning and are consecutively following each other are: good language development followed by good reading competence and social development, coping and motivation for learning, successful learning at primary school which leads to fulfilling secondary education and consequently continuing education and finding a job (ibid).

Subsequently, the factors that hinder learning are: delayed language development, reading difficulties which can be accompanied by behavioural problems, failures which can affect the motivation for learning, dropout from secondary school and finally finding less satisfactory job (ibid).

1.3 Background for the choice of the topic

The choice of the topic for the study has been not only dictated by the personal interest in how dyslexia affects foreign language learning, but also its relevance and importance for the field of special needs education. Long line of research in dyslexia has brought significant changes in defining the phenomenon, developing the testing procedures and coming up with possible methods of treatment. However, the issue of dyslexia in foreign language learning has still remained an under-research area (Kormos, Csizér & Sarkadi, 2009). Moreover, the perspective of people with disabilities has been recently recognized as a significant gap in the

research in disabilities (Burden & Burdett, 2007). It has been indicated as especially noticeable in the field of dyslexia, with an extensive and still growing number of publications, where the main focus has always been on dyslexia as a phenomenon and hardly ever on feelings and opinions of people with dyslexia themselves (ibid). Student voice research has become increasingly popular and appreciated on the international arena, which Reid and Wearmouth (2009) justify by stating:

“If we assume students are active agents in their own learning we have to try to understand how they feel about difficulties related to dyslexia, and what they know will support them most effectively. Otherwise there is a serious question about how we can know what will best fit what they need”(p.88).

Following the last phrase: how should we know what is best for the students if we do not ask for their opinion? How can we understand their feelings without listening to their voices? Several studies have proven that seeing the world from the pupil’s perspective can help the teachers to get a deeper understanding of their feelings, problems, preferences to learning and therefore positively influence educational practices to make learning more accessible and enjoyable for students (Riddick, 1996; Ferguson, Hanreddy & Draxton, 2011).

1.4 Norwegian laws and provisions for the students with dyslexia

Norwegian students learn foreign language from the first years of primary school and it is a compulsory subject for every student. The very early and intensive exposure to English language through the mass media in Norway may be one of the reasons why Norwegian students are the top performers in the international tests of English as a second language (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). However, this is hardly ever the reality for students with dyslexia (DITT, 2001, as cited in Kormos & Kontra, 2008).

The scope of special rights and provisions for students with disabilities vary across countries. The Norwegian Educational Act enclosed the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child which provides every child with the right to education which must be adapted to their needs and abilities. It is stated in the first chapter of the Norwegian Educational Act that teaching should be adapted to the individual needs of the students so that everyone can develop their potential (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 1998). In the White Paper (St.meld.nr.31,

2007-2008) the adapted teaching is described as a variation in the use of tasks, teaching methods and materials.

Norwegian students with dyslexia are entitled to extended time on the exams, the right to use computer during the lessons, the provision of necessary helping programmes and audiobooks. In some cases they are provided with help in the form of special teaching organized at their school (Dysleksi Norge, 2010). Moreover, the students can seek waiver of attending foreign language classes for the period of junior high school (ungdomsskole), but are obliged to continue learning the language in secondary school (videregående skole) (ibid).

1.5 The goal of the study

This goal of the study was to explore how students with dyslexia experience learning English as a foreign language. The series of questions were asked in semi-structured interviews in order to get a deeper understanding of students' feelings and opinions. The main question posed in the research is:

- *How do students with dyslexia experience learning English as a foreign language?*

The question about experiences with learning is quite broad and therefore the following sub-questions were formulated in order to focus the attention to particular issues which are central for the study:

- *What educational challenges caused by dyslexia do students face in learning English?*
- *What are the emotional factors that accompany these challenges?*
- *How do the pedagogical decisions of English teachers affect the students and their learning of English as a foreign language?*

1.6 The outline of the thesis

The thesis will comprise six chapters:

Chapter I provides the background for the choice of the topic, as well as the statement of the main goals.

Chapter II describes the theoretical framework and relevant studies relating to definition of dyslexia; explains the role of dyslexia in foreign language learning, the importance of affective factors in foreign language learning achievement, and the role of the teacher.

Chapter III treats of the research process including the description of the study design, sampling process, method of data collection and analysis, and ethical issues connected to the study.

Chapter IV presents the data gathered in the study which is followed by critical analysis presented in Ch. V.

Finally, the conclusions and the recommendations for further research are given in the last chapter (VI).

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Defining dyslexia

Dyslexia is a term which originates from the Greek words: “dys”, meaning “difficulty with”, and “lexis”, denoting “words” (Schneider & Crombie, 2003). It is frequently used as a synonym for “specific learning difficulties” (Riddick, 1996). However, the latter term is said to be an umbrella expression that covers several learning difficulties other than dyslexia (ibid). The name “dyslexia” has been recognized as more appropriate in medical milieu, whereas “specific learning difficulty” is claimed to be more typical and frequently used by educators (ibid). However, as the focus of this study centers on the experiences of students diagnosed with dyslexia and without having any additional learning difficulties, the term “dyslexia” will be applied throughout this thesis.

The phenomenon has been known for more than 130 years now, and despite the growing body of research in this area, there are still difficulties in giving a precise and universal definition (Kormos & Smith, 2012). It is estimated that the incidence of dyslexia varies from 3 to 6% in the population at large, with numbers and perceptions of the phenomenon differing across the countries (Hulme & Snowling, 2009). The first person who identified dyslexia was a German doctor Adolph Kussmaul, who related the condition to visual problems and therefore gave it the name of word-blindness (Kormos & Smith, 2012). The discovery of the phenomenon was followed by numerous investigations and a number of varying definitions and hypothesis were presented (Olagboyega, 2008). Currently, the expression “differences” in learning and cognition has been used in defining dyslexia, instead of the previously used term “deficits” (ibid).

While a variety of explanations of the phenomenon have been suggested, this thesis will utilize the definition suggested by the International Dyslexia Association, which saw it as:

a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin (B). It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities (BH). These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities (C) and the provisions of effective classroom instruction (E) (Kormos & Smith, 2012, p.24).

The strong point of this definition is the fact that it includes four different perspectives: biological (B), cognitive (C), behavioural (BH) and environmental (E) (ibid). The following part of the paper will attempt to expand on each of the aforementioned elements of the definition.

2.1.1 Behavioural level

The behavioural level of the definition concentrates on the way dyslexia manifests itself. The most widely acknowledged manifestations of dyslexia relate to problems with correct and fluent word decoding, incorrect spelling, and poor sensitivity to rhymes (Nijakowska, 2010). However, it cannot be approved as a complete definition since reading problems per se do not automatically denote dyslexia (ibid). Moreover, dyslexia has a dimensional nature and the severity and character of the problems may vary considerably from one individual to another (Fletcher, 2009).

The problems related to word decoding may relate to decoding non-words, but also those that are actual expressions in the given language (Kormos & Smith, 2012). Furthermore, the difficulties with words decoding may impact on the reading comprehension (Nijakowska, 2010). It has been also confirmed in several studies that students with dyslexia frequently face spelling problems and these problems can often be the sole manifestation of dyslexia (Snowling, 2008, as cited in Kormos & Smith, 2012).

Furthermore, students with dyslexia have been recognized to reveal problems with automaticity, which is considered as one of the fundamental elements of learning and a prerequisite for becoming a skilled reader (Kormos & Smith, 2012).

Another documented manifestation of dyslexia concerns limited vocabulary in comparison to students without dyslexia, relatively slow words retrieval, as well as problems with long-term verbal learning (Snowling, 1995). Students with dyslexia may also have shorter attention span, which may cause problems in following the lessons, keeping up deadlines, as well as acquiring new knowledge (Nijakowska, 2010).

Among the many other possible manifestations of dyslexia, illegible handwriting has been recognized in many publications and explained as a result of the difficulties with fine motor skills (ibid).

The list of the possible indicators of dyslexia is long but the most common signs are reading and writing problems. The behavioural manifestations are not sufficient in recognizing an individual with dyslexia since they may have many roots, not necessarily related to dyslexia (ibid). In addition, the severity of symptoms may change over time as a result of successfully elaborated compensatory strategies which make up for the difficulties and make them less apparent (Nijakowska, 2010). Therefore, if one made the assessment based merely on the behavioural perspective, one would conclude that there is a likelihood of growing out of dyslexia, which in reality is not the case (Kormos & Smith, 2012).

2.1.2 Cognitive level

The predominant existing explanation of dyslexia on cognitive level has been the Phonological Deficit Hypothesis (Everatt & Reid, 2009). It recognizes the problem with phonological processing as the proximal factor determining dyslexia. Phonological processing has been explained as a use of speech without reflecting on how the words are built (Nijakowska, 2010). The components of phonological processing that are most responsible for the difficulties faced by students with dyslexia are phonological awareness, limited working memory, and problems with words retrieval (ibid). Phonological awareness denotes: the conscious usage of speech with comprehension that words are built of smaller units, aware analysis of words structure, and ability to perform different manipulations of the phonological elements (Snowling, 1995). Phonological deficit includes difficulties with words retrieval, phonemic awareness problems and deficits in short-term memory (ibid). Students with dyslexia may reveal problems with distinguishing sounds in the words they hear and do not understand how particular sounds are represented by letters (ibid).

The Phonological Deficit Hypothesis has been further developed and a Double-Deficit Hypothesis was proposed as a modification of the original theory. The Double-Deficit Hypothesis says phonological processing should not be perceived as the only cause for dyslexia, as the role of deficits in words naming speed should be emphasized as well (Nijakowska, 2010).

Stanovich (1993, as cited in Riddick, 1996), argues that the aspect of visual factor in dyslexia should not be neglected. The visual element in dyslexia has already been noted by Samuel Orton, who observed children mixing letters like b-d and reversing words (was-saw). At that time he called the phenomenon strephosymbolia which means “twisted symbols” and

explained the condition as visual processing problem (Riddick, 1996). Some students with dyslexia experience discomfort when trying to read a text as it appears to be fuzzy and moving on the page when they are trying to read. However, this problem has been observed in small percentage of students with dyslexia and it is suggested that it needs closer investigation (Garzia, 1993, as cited in Riddick, 1996).

2.1.3 Biological level

A great body of research has focused on studying brain structure and functions in persons with dyslexia to explain neurological causes of cognitive differences (Fletcher, 2009). The results have shown that dyslexic brain differs in anatomy and activity from non-dyslexic. However, it has been challenged by some researchers who believe these differences in brain structure may be a possible result rather than the cause of dyslexia (Nijakowska, 2010).

Moreover, it has been indicated that the transfer of information between right and left hemispheres differs in people with dyslexia (ibid). Shaul and Brenitz (2007, as cited in Everatt & Reid, 2009) examined the brain activity during various linguistic tasks and compared students with dyslexia to regular learners. The results showed that in the case of students with dyslexia, the information appeared first in the right hemisphere and after 9 to 12ms it moved to the left hemisphere. However in regular readers, the information arrived in the left hemisphere before moving to the right one after 4 to 6ms (Everatt & Reid, 2009).

There has been also increasing interest and growing evidence for relationship between cerebellum deficit and dyslexia (Kormos & Smith, 2012). Cerebellum is part of the brain responsible for integration of sensory input, and together with other brain areas it helps in internalizing actions, skills and information (Fawcett & Nicolson, 2004). In the case of dyslexia, the deficit in cerebellum structure negatively affects reading, writing and spelling skills (Everatt & Reid, 2009). Moreover, cerebellum is believed to play significant role in learning to make activities automatic and fluent, which is observed as a frequent problem among the students with dyslexia (ibid).

Finally, it is believed that genetics play an important role in determining dyslexia (Snowling, 1996). There is 50% probability that boys whose parents or siblings have dyslexia will have dyslexia as well (50% if they have a father with dyslexia and 40% if it is the mother), and lower probability for a girl (ibid). Notwithstanding that dyslexia is proven to be a genetic

disorder, having a parent with dyslexia makes one at risk- but not doomed to having it themselves. It is rather the interaction of genetic factors with environmental factors that may increase the risk of having dyslexia and not the genes on their own (Nijakowska, 2010).

The three levels described above are all connected, and move in the direction from biological, through cognitive, to behavioural (Hulme & Snowling, 2009). It means that genetic factors may result in differences in the brain's structure and functions, which consequently is the cause of cognitive deficits, and those in the end are manifested as observable symptoms in an individual with dyslexia (ibid).

2.1.4 Environment

The three aforementioned levels are according to many researchers incomplete without considering environmental factors (Hulme & Snowling, 2009; Fletcher, 2009). Although the environment per se does not cause dyslexia, it may change the nature of cognitive and behavioural consequences in people with genetic risk for dyslexia (Hulme & Snowling, 2009).

The environmental factors relate to the amount of exposure to literature, the importance of reading in the family, or the methodology used by the teacher (Kormos & Smith, 2012). It has been suggested that teacher's pedagogical strategies may aggravate students' problems unless special accommodations, like explicit instruction, are applied (Nijakowska, 2010). The importance of teaching methods and instructional strategies will be further discussed in part 2.5.

2.2 Dyslexia and foreign language learning

The substantial amount of study in dyslexia has shed light on its causes and influence on literacy skills with the predominant focus on native language. Currently, it has been widely accepted that the problems caused by dyslexia may vary from one language to another (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006). In the following part of the thesis the explanation for the relationship between native language problems and their consequences for learning of second language will be presented, with the reference to the English language. A brief comparison between Norwegian and English languages will be given for better understanding of the problems a Norwegian learner may face in English learning situations.

2.2.1 Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis

It has been proven that dyslexia tends to pose more challenges in learning a foreign language than any other learning difficulty (Kormos & Smith, 2012). Students with dyslexia may learn to mask their problems after some years of working out compensatory strategies. However, it is argued that these strategies are not effective when one approaches a new linguistic system of another language (ibid). Moreover, it is believed that foreign language teachers may find it problematic to notice the symptoms of dyslexia as they tend to blame the new language for being the cause in itself for the possible struggles in the classroom (Olagboyega, 2008).

The study on the difficulties that dyslexia causes to Norwegian learners of foreign languages has been scarce area. The first, and to my knowledge the only, study of this kind was conducted by Helland and Kaasa (2005). The authors presented the results showing significant discrepancies between the scores in foreign language learning with dyslexia and their peers without dyslexia, which were visible in every aspect of the language.

Sparks and Ganschow (1991), who have been researching the relationship between foreign and native language performance since 1980s, came up with the suggestion of the most successful predictors of foreign language learning difficulties. The authors argued that problems faced in one's native language will translate into comparable difficulties in foreign language, and therefore called native language performance as the most reliable predictor of success or failure in second language (ibid). They formulated the results of their studies in the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH).

The primary findings of the hypothesis can be summed up in 3 points:

- difficulties in the linguistic codes of phoneme-grapheme correspondence, syntax and semantics which occur in one's native language are present in foreign language learning
- the biggest influence on FLL among the abovementioned three linguistic codes are ascribed to sound-symbol relations awareness and syntactic processing skills. Much less importance was given to semantics in FLL problems
- low motivation and self-confidence problems affect language learning but are not the cause with the FLL problems but rather the consequence (Ganschow & Sparks, 2005, as cited in Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

The LCDH was supported by other scholars like Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp, and Chatow's (1990) who also stated that students' performance in their native language is the most important predictor of foreign language skills. Sparks and Ganschow conducted a number of studies with their colleagues in order to verify the LCDH (Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorsky, Skinner & Patton, 1994; Ganschow, Sparks, Javorsky, Pohlman, & Bishop-Marbury, 1991; Sparks, Ganschow, & Patton, 1995, as cited in Ganschow, Sparks & Javorsky, 1998). The studies have confirmed that children who struggle with phonological, phonological/orthographic and syntactic elements of their first language, will most probably show the same difficulties in foreign language learning (Ganschow et al. 1998).

It is worth to mention the findings of the research on Swedish students with dyslexia, which challenged the abovementioned LCDH (Miller- Guron & Lundberg 2000, as cited in Nijakowska, 2010). The study showed that Swedish adults with dyslexia prefer reading in EFL than in the native language. The authors called it a *dyslexic preference for English reading* and suggested that it may be caused by the fact that Swedish language has shallow orthography which requires phoneme to phoneme decoding abilities. Therefore, Swedish students with dyslexia who struggle with phonological aspects of language on the phoneme level, may prefer deep orthography of English language where they can use their grapheme-phoneme strategies which were not so efficient when used in Swedish shallow orthography (ibid). Taking into account this explanation, it could be expected that the Norwegian students with dyslexia could express similar preference for English reading as the Swedish participants of the study. On the scale (1-5) which is applied to describes the level of transparency of the language, where 1- means deep orthography and 5-transparent orthography, the Norwegian and Swedish languages has been recognized as semi-transparent, getting the point 3 (Hagtvet, 2006).

2.2.2 Psycholinguistic grain size theory

This study has focused on the English language not only because it is one of the most common languages taught at school, but also because of its particular difficulty that it is claimed to cause for the learners with dyslexia (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006).

It has been documented that some languages may pose more challenges to the learner than others (ibid). The differences in reading fluency and speed across different languages were

explained in psycholinguistic grain size theory (PGST), proposed by Ziegler and Goswami (2006). The abovementioned theory says that dependence between units of sounds and their visual representation differs across languages and these differences translate into the differences between the level of difficulty in reading acquisition from one language to another (ibid). The visual symbols can represent sound units of varying size, which is called psycholinguistic grain size. In other words, grain size denotes the number of letters that represent a phonological unit (ibid). For example in the Japanese language a symbol represents whole syllable, whereas Chinese characters represent whole words (ibid).

A one-syllable word is built of onset, which is a single consonant or few clustered consonants at the beginning of the word, and rime that is the remaining part of the word (Nijakowska, 2010). According to PGST, readers of a language with shallow orthography, such as Italian or Spanish, depend on the grapheme-phoneme relationship in understanding words for the sound-letter correspondence is highly reliable. On the other hand, readers of languages with deep orthographies, where phoneme-grapheme correspondence is not consistent, cannot rely on smaller grain sizes because these smaller reading units that represent a particular phoneme (like single letter or cluster of letters) are even more inconsistent than the bigger units (rimes and syllables) in these languages (ibid).

Relating grain size theory to students with dyslexia, it has been concluded that the level of challenges they face in reading a language depends on the nature of that language and its orthography (ibid). The following part will explore this dependence on the example of the English language.

2.3 English as a foreign language and its relation to Norwegian language

The English language has been called for a dyslexic language in several publications, as a result of its particular difficulty for students with dyslexia (Everatt and Reid, 2009).

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the particularly challenging character of the language can make it at the same time helpful in identifying dyslexia in English language learners than in learners of any other languages (Everatt & Reid, 2009, Snowling, 2001, as cited in Nijakowska, 2010).

Despite the fact that Norwegian and English languages show many common linguistic features, there are some syntactic, morphological and phonological divergences between these two (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). English language is placed on the top of most difficult to read and spell because of its deep orthography (Van der Leij, 2004). The biggest challenge for Norwegian learners of English as a foreign language is the orthography which results in spelling problems, reading and comprehension difficulties (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). According to orthographic depth hypothesis, the difficulties in foreign language acquisition and learning depend on the transparency of the orthography which is indicated by the correspondence between speech sound and its written representation. The English language has many multi-letter graphemes and one phoneme can be represented in a variety of ways. One sound may be spelled by more than one letter and on the other way round, one letter may be represented by more than one sound. There is no consistency in sound-symbol relationship, neither in spelling nor in reading in English language (Nijakowska, 2010).

In learning reading in foreign languages that have deep orthographic system the important role plays the onset-rime awareness. It helps in finding the patterns between the words that begin with the same sounds or have similar endings (eh. bat, hat, rat). In languages with shallow orthographies in turn, the learner depends on the awareness of individual phonemes (Nijakowska, 2010).

The sound-symbol relationship in English language is complicated and 44 sounds correspond to 26 letters and as a result a student needs to understand that one sound can be represented by more than one letter, or that one letter can be sounded out in more than one way depending on the context (ibid).

Word spelling in English is not phonetically transparent and therefore two words with the same root may be pronounced in two different ways like in heal-health (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). Moreover, one phoneme can be presented by many different graphemes like for example: cat/ chaos/ quote.

Norwegian language is semi-transparent with an alphabet consisting of 29 letters which comprise 40 phonemes and 35 graphemes. In English in turn, we have 26 letters comprising around 40 phonemes which are represented by a huge amount of more than 500 graphemes (Elley, 1992, as cited in Kormos & Kontra, 2008).

As an example one can look at the letter *i* which can be represented by 12 different symbols depending on the word it is used in. Therefore we have:

Seen (**ee**)/ She (**e**)/ (Meat (**ea**)/ Field (**ie**)/ Receive(**ei**)/ People(**eo**)/ Amoeba(**oe**)/
Caesarian(**ae**)/ Key(**ey**)/ Quay(**ay**) / Obscene, concede, replete, obese (**eCe**) /Machine (**i**).

One does not need to have dyslexia to find this confusing and difficult to learn.

2.4 Affective factors in learning a foreign language

As mentioned in the previous part (2.2.), it has been widely accepted today that dyslexia may result in significant impediment to the achievement of foreign language competence.

However, it would be a fallacy to think that an individual with dyslexia is incapable of acquiring a foreign language. Factors other than foreign language aptitude has been widely recognized and emphasized in current publications (Crombie, 1995). A range of factors has been suggested but this paper will focus primarily on motivation and attitude, self-esteem, and anxiety, which will be presented in more detail in the following part.

2.4.1 The current views on the affective factors and their relationship with learning achievement and with each other

The reasons for the individual differences in the level of achievement in foreign language learning have been in the focus of research for many years, which resulted in numerous suggestions of possible variables contributing to these differences (Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997). As previously mentioned, some researchers, like Sparks and Ganschow (1991), have recognized aptitude as one of the prime predictors of successful second language learning.

Students with dyslexia may face a lot of challenges in learning a foreign language, and many studies have shown that they score considerably lower than their peers without dyslexia on all of the components of aptitude measures (Csizér, Kormos & Sarkadi, 2010). However, concentrating on the aptitude as the main predictor of FLL success have been criticized by many researchers for being incomplete and called “single-minded obsession” that neglects other important variables (Smart, Elton & Burnett, 1970, as cited in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 86). Since that time a considerable amount of publications have emerged and

highlighted the role of affective factors in FL performance (Crombie, 1995). Similarly, the critique which came from MacIntyre (1955) was directed to the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis for being an incomplete explanation for success or failure in FLL. The missing element in LCDH, according to MacIntyre, is the role of affective factors like attitude or motivation (ibid). This view has gained many advocates and increasingly more authors have acknowledged the role of the affective factors (Gardner, 2010).

Probably one of most widely recognized theories related to affective factors in FLL is the Affective Filter Hypothesis which is a part of Krashen's Monitor Model (Gregg, 1984). The hypothesis was first proposed by Dulay and Burt (1997, as cited in Sparks & Ganschow, 1991) as affective delimiters. Krashen (1982, as cited in Du, 2009) calls attention to attitude, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety as important variables in acquiring a foreign language. He suggests that these factors can work as a filter which, when it is high, may impede the acquisition by blocking the language input. The filter is raised in learners with poor motivation, lacking self-esteem, and experiencing high anxiety or negative attitude to learning (Du, 2009). It is therefore a significant responsibility of the teacher to contribute to lowering this filter (ibid).

Krashen's theory provoked a lot of discussion but has become widely recognized and appreciated for its practical contribution (ibid). Krashen and Terrell (1983, as cited in Du, 2009), came up with concrete suggestions for the teachers about the way to lower the affective filter by cultivating students' self-esteem, facilitating achievement of their learning goals and boosting their motivation and positive attitude (ibid).

The researchers in the field of dyslexia are unanimous about the occurrence of the social and emotional variables like lower self-esteem or poor motivation, and describe their persistence in the adult life (Stampoltzis & Polychronopoulou, 2009; Riddick, 1996; Hellendoorn & Ruijsenaars, 2000). However, there has not been yet a clear agreement related to the nature of the relationship between the affective factors and FL performance. Sparks and Ganschow (1995) for example, hypothesize that the affective variables are the consequence of the difficulties in FLL rather than their cause. A great deal of researcher claims that there is a relationship between the affective variables and the L2 achievement and between the variables themselves (Gardner et al., 1997). Therefore, the question asked by the researchers has not been whether there exists the relationship between the affective factors and FLL, but rather what the character of this relationship is (McIntyre, 1995). Among the numerous

affective factors in FLL proposed so far, probably the most frequently researched have been: motivation and attitudes, self-esteem and anxiety, with the first one claimed to be the most significant (Gardner et al., 1997).

The role of *attitudes* and *motivation* has been described first by Gardner and Lambert (1959, as cited in Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) but their possible influence on learning a second language had been suggested even earlier. The attitudes that one expresses towards the learning situation can refer to the student's evaluation of the teacher and their teaching practice as well as their evaluation of the course (Gardner et al., 1997). In simple words: "your attitude to something is the way you think and feel about it" (Du, 2009, p.163). Some studies suggest that the attitude towards a subject is influenced by the way one assesses their abilities in the subject (Polychroni, Koukoura, & Anagnostou, 2006). Therefore it may be expected that students with dyslexia who perceive themselves as poor English learners may express negative attitude towards learning the subject.

When it comes to *motivation*, it has been suggested by many educators that its role is as important, if not more important, as the language aptitude (Gardner, 2010). Even the most talented student may not be able to achieve the full potential and long-term goals if the motivation is poor (Du, 2009). One of the most referred to definitions of motivation in FLL has been formulated by Gardner, and described it as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of desire to do so and satisfaction in this activity" (Gardner, 1985, as cited in Du, 2009, p.162). The three elements of the motivation which are frequently emphasized are: attitude, desire and persistence in learning the language (Polychroni et al., 2006; Garner et al., 1997). Many researchers measure attitude and motivation together as they claim that motivation entails attitude towards the learning situation (Csizér et al., 2010). The motivation has been seen as a dynamic by a number of researchers, and therefore can be additionally affected by numerous external factors, like classroom environment or the teaching strategies (ibid). It can be also affected by the other already mentioned affective variables. Both Garner (2010) and Krashen (1985) distinguish between two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental, where the first one relates to genuine interest in the language and the culture, and the latter one is driven by the more utilitarian goals such as the desire to pass the course, fulfill the basic requirement, avoid punishment and failure, travel abroad.

Therefore, the feeling of failure may contribute to low motivation, high language anxiety, but can also negatively affect self-esteem (Kormos & Smith, 2012). *Self-esteem* is explained by Riddick (1996) as “a measure of how far an individual’s perceived self (self-image) matches up to the ideal self” (p.34). The way one perceives themselves as learners is connected to their need of “acceptance, competence and worth” (ibid). A student with high self-esteem can have more faith in their ability, be more eager to voluntarily take part in the class activities. The students with low self-esteem on the other hand, will be more withdrawn and afraid to participate voluntarily, may express less confidence in their own skills and give up in face of failure, and they will most probably expect failure (Riddick, 1996). A longitudinal study conducted in Norway (Gjessing & Karlsen, 1989, as cited in Riddick, 1996) included 3000 participants and revealed that students with dyslexia and reading difficulties expressed poor self-esteem and problems in peer relationships. The same pattern has been revealed in numerous studies which showed that students with dyslexia tend to have lower self-esteem than their peers (Riddick, 1996). The factors contributing to low self-esteem were social comparisons with their classmates and the feeling of being less valued by their teachers (ibid). Students with high self-esteem may be more eager to participate in the lesson activities, are not afraid to take a challenge in new learning situations and believe in success of their effort. What is more, when they face failure, students with high self-esteem attribute it to environmental factors unlike those with low self-esteem, who blame themselves for any failure they experience (ibid).

The last affective factor that will be mentioned is *anxiety*. It is believed that language courses have particularly anxiety aggravating characteristic among any other courses and this opinion has been expressed by many students of foreign languages (MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). A number of publications perceived the level of anxiety triggered by language courses as alarming and calling for intervention (MacIntyre, 1995). When talking about the anxiety in FLL one needs to make a distinction between a general anxiety and a foreign language anxiety. It has been documented that only the latter one has a negative impact on achievement in FLL, and many researchers suggest the cyclical relationship between FL anxiety and FL performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Language anxiety can be explained as “individual’s apprehension in the language class or in settings where the language is used” (Gardner et al., 1997, p.345). In the study of over 1000 students from Canada (Gardner, Smythe, Clement & Glikzman, 1976, as cited in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), language anxiety was concluded to be one of the best predictors of the achievement in

FLL. The big interest in the role of anxiety in FLL resulted in the development of measurement scales internationally and one of the most popular is FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) which allows measuring the level of anxiety among FL learners. The researchers using these measures all agree about the negative effect of anxiety in FLL process. The numerous studies have suggested that language anxiety arises as the result of failure and negative experiences with FLL which in turn impedes the achievement in further learning process (Gardner et al., 1997). In the assessment of anxiety, there are three main components which are believed to have most negative impact on the FLL and these are: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Du, 2009). The last one seems to have most detrimental influence on the learning process. It seems to cause a lot of apprehension in the situations where the students would be exposed to the social evaluation by their peers or by the teacher (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

2.5 Teacher's pedagogy

The previous part of the thesis treated of the importance of affective factors in learning achievement. However, the impact of the teacher's pedagogy on these variables needs to be emphasized. It has been widely accepted that inappropriate pedagogical decisions may exacerbate the emotional responses to the classroom challenges faced by students with dyslexia, and create additional hindrances in learning achievement (Birsh, 1999, as cited in Schneider & Crombie, 2003).

For the purpose of this study the term pedagogy will be defined as teacher's decisions concerning the choice of materials and activities, teaching strategies and approaches used to transfer the knowledge, instructional and assessment methods and other actions and accommodations which teachers employ in order to facilitate learning (Blackman, 2009).

There are many recommendations concerning the particular methods of work with students with dyslexia and ways of adapting teaching environment. The best known and mostly recommended approach is multisensory structured learning approach (Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Crombie, 2000). The main rule of the approach is: "hear it, see it, say it, write it, act it out", which means activating all the senses in the learning process and providing a learner with plentiful possibilities to practice, repeat and finally automatize the information (Crombie, 2000, p.16).

The ten commandments of Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) can serve as another example. The commandments are the rules which the authors (ibid) recommend to be followed by foreign language teachers in order to improve the learner's motivation and achievement. Among the other things, the rules relate to teacher's behaviour, the character of relationship with the students, facilitating warm and non-threatening environment in the classroom, adapting the curriculum and expectations to the individual needs, increasing self-esteem and promoting achievement, and the use of technology (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

Van Manen (1991, as cited in Nielsen, 2011) highlights additionally the importance of tact in pedagogy. Pedagogical tact is expressed by protecting students from being hurt and humiliated because of their differences and vulnerability.

Additionally, Kormos and Smith (2012) suggest that instructions and feedback should be clear and not ambiguous, providing students with hints on how to improve their learning achievement.

2.6 The review of relevant studies

The following part will present the results of relevant studies which focused on the learning experiences of students or adults with dyslexia. The literature search showed scarce results for studies referring particularly to perceptions of students with dyslexia learning foreign languages. However, the literature referring more generally to experiences of adults and students with dyslexia reflecting on their school years will be synthesized below.

The majority of research related to the school experiences of students with dyslexia presents rather a negative picture of their reflections. The students participating in the research of Stacey Blackman (2009), expressed their feelings that teachers' pedagogical decisions create additional hindrances, instead of helping them to overcome those that are already posed by dyslexia. The study reports that students develop frustration when their teachers do not adapt classroom activities and methodology to meet their individual needs. Moreover, the students mention lack of understanding from their peers, stigmatization and the fear of being ridiculed. The stigmatization of students with dyslexia has been justified by the vague opinions that people have about the disability and attributing it to the low intelligence (Ranaldi, 2003, as cited in Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi, 2009).

It has been supported by the results of Riddick's (2000) research, which also showed that students feel stigmatized by their peers. However, the author claims that this feeling of stigmatization is based not on the label of dyslexia as such, but often because of the struggles that can easily be noticed by others. This results in withdrawal, feeling anxious and trying to hide the problems by avoiding situations which could be potentially threatening for exposing students' difficulties.

A study of Hungarian students with dyslexia learning English examined the importance of teacher's general conduct in the classroom, their methods of teaching and assessment techniques for the learning process (Kormos et al., 2009). The findings revealed again the negative attitudes of the foreign language learners, predominantly in big group teaching, which implicated the need for more individual attention from their teachers. The students expressed their lack of motivation and low self-confidence as a response to their difficulties in keeping the general pace of the lesson. They felt they lagged behind the others and that their teachers did not provide enough help to improve their situation and give them the feeling of success.

One more implication of this study was that students' perceptions of their teachers are either black or white, which was shown in Hellendoorn and Ruijsenaars's study as well (2000). The negative picture of a language teacher was caused mostly by their personality, lack of understanding and exposing the student to humiliation which at the same impacted on their self-esteem, motivation and anxiety. Students were appreciative of the teachers who showed understanding and try to provide necessary help. The most valued personal characteristic was teacher's enthusiasm. Teachers who knew where to set the bar and were demanding, were very positively assessed by students as well. However, out of 15 participants describing their language teachers, only 3 expressed positive attitudes. When it comes to the language classroom organization, the students described the classes as boring, with too much emphasis on rote memorizing, and being based mostly on the grammar learning.

Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi (2009) conducted another study which investigated the motivational dynamics of students with dyslexia learning foreign language. The authors showed that the reason for decreased motivation was the feeling of ongoing failure rather than the difficulties in learning as such. Furthermore, most of the students in the study blamed themselves and not dyslexia for their failures, which was related to their low self-concept. Some students ascribed their failure to their laziness, which the authors assume was the effect

of the internalized perceptions they hold of themselves. These perceptions are frequently expressed by the students who face this kind of response from their teachers (Kormos et al. 2010; Stampoltzis & Polychronopoulou, 2009; Gibson & Kendall, 2010; Hellendoorn & Ruijsenaar, 2000).

Klingner and Vaughn (1999) made a synthesis of 20 studies comprising 4,659 students with learning difficulties, focusing on their perceptions of teacher's pedagogical practices. One of the central findings was that the majority of students did not feel that necessary accommodations and individual needs were taken into consideration by their teachers. The students in these studies appeared to be great and competent judges of their teacher's pedagogical practices. They expressed their preferences for particular classroom organization, like group work and peer tutoring, and for specific teaching accommodations like giving more time when necessary, or providing useful feedback. However, when it comes to the accommodations, the students in secondary schools appreciated the adjustments in instructional practices rather than grades or tasks modifications. The students expressed their preference for the teachers who are able to present the information in a clear way, use extra time when required, suggest some learning strategies to the students and use the same materials but in a different way according to the individual needs and learning style. The majority of students in the revised studies expressed their opinion that only when the grades are assigned on the basis of the same criteria for all students, they can get a real satisfaction and a feeling of achievement.

Similar responses were reported in several other studies where students felt it was unfair, demotivating and even humiliating to receive adjusted tasks (Hellendoorn & Ruijsenaars, 2009), follow the curriculum tailored to their need and including no challenge (Anderson, 2009; Gibson & Kendall, 2010), or getting a grade which was higher from what they felt would be deserved (Gibson & Kendall, 2010).

Several studies have presented students with dyslexia as very competent judges of their teachers' strategies and behaviour in the classroom and their awareness of different treatment by their teachers (Weinstein, 1983; Marshall & Wenstein, 1986; Nicholls & Thorkildsen, 1989, as cited in Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; Blackman, 2011; Kormos et al., 2009; Klingner, Vaughn, 1999). Blackman (2011) gives some examples of the strategies mentioned by the participants of her study which she divides into three groups: those that promote the student's independence (e.g. by allowing the students to find the answer and postponing to give the

solution themselves), those that contribute to the student's understanding (e.g. demonstrations) and involvement (e.g. drama or storytelling), and finally the manner of communication and presentation used by the teacher.

However, it has been contradicted by the study of Cecilia Nielsen (2011), who concludes that students with dyslexia in her research were not able to reflect on teacher's pedagogical practices, but only on their general conduct and personality. The students in the study appreciated teachers who cared about them, helped them to find their strengths and improve their self-esteem. Even though the students expressed their gratitude for the work of their teachers and ascribed their success to the teacher's help, they were not able to reflect on any particular methods the teachers used to help them to succeed. The author (Nielsen, 2011) states that what stays in the students' memories is "what the teachers have done to their understanding of themselves" (p. 558). Therefore, the students whose teachers made them feel unintelligent and incapable of succeeding can create the picture of themselves as a person doomed to failure lacking self-confidence. Just like in Skaalvik's (1994) study, the teacher's treatment or verbal and non-verbal messages, may bring negative emotional consequences which persist into the adulthood.

3 Methodology

The research method describes the way a researcher is trying to reach the goal of the study (Kvale, 1996). The choice of research method and approach to the study should be motivated by the type of question one is trying to answer and what kind of data needs to be obtained in order to answer these questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In this chapter of the thesis the research methods will be presented and the justification of the particular choices will be provided.

Moreover, the chapter will present the steps from the selection of the instrument for data collection, through the sampling process, description of actual interviews, and finally the choice of the approach to and process of data analysis. In the last part of the chapter, the issues of validity and reliability will be addressed, followed by the ethical considerations that arose in the study.

3.1 Qualitative approach

Despite the ongoing debate on the qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the former being criticized for the lack of scientific validity, there are many researchers who advocate the use and benefits of qualitative studies (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1984). As the present study does not aim to obtain statistical data, but rather get a deep understanding of people's experiences described in their own words, the qualitative approach will be used.

Smith (1978, as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1984) describes qualitative data as an attractive source of information that provides "well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts"(p. 15). In support of qualitative data Miles and Huberman (1994) state that "*words, especially when they are organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader- another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner-than pages of numbers*" (p.1).

This research was concentrated on obtaining the subjective knowledge of the participants, namely the opinions of the students with dyslexia. Since interviewing on people's feelings, personal experiences may cause distress, the trust and positive rapport with the participant is an indispensable element (Kvale, 2009). Therefore, the qualitative approach is the natural and

choice and most suitable one for the purpose of this study. Quantitative approach deprives the researcher from the possibility of building intimate relationship with the participants, and one should not expect to get the same answers from a questionnaire sent by email, as from the personally asked questions in the interviews (ibid). As Kvale (1997) says: "It is the human interaction in the interview that produces scientific knowledge" (p.28).

3.2 Method of data collection

3.2.1 Qualitative interviewing

The word "inter-view" in itself indicates that it is an inter-change of views between the researcher and the research participant who discuss the topic which they both find interesting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It has a specific purpose and is structured and directed into getting the view on a particular topic (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This method of data collection provides a researcher with a privileged access to lived world of the participants and the way they perceive the occurring situations or accompanying feelings of these events (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is a "necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry" (Seidman, 2006, p.11).

The central job of an interviewer is to interpret not only on the literally expressed message, but also read between the lines, see the emotions and body language, face expressions, or voice tone (Kvale, 2009).

The interviewer is the one who has the control over the situation, introduces the topic, asks questions and decides when to finish the conversation. Even though it is the interviewee who gets more time for speaking, the interviewer's task is to ask follow up questions in order to get additional clarifications, listen carefully and have the overall control over the interview situation (Kvale, 2009).

The important element of qualitative interviewing is openness to unpredicted phenomena, as opposed to sticking to assumptions and understandings made in advance (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher is not obliged to follow precisely formulated questions, but leave space for improvisation, additional comments and follow-up questions, as the spontaneous reaction to interviewee's accounts (ibid). The researcher is guiding the informant into the topics of the study, but without implying any specific dimensions about these topics

and leaving more freedom to the interviewer to come up with the aspects they find central (ibid).

The people taking part in the interviews have been referred to by variety of expressions in the literature on interviewing. Rubin and Rubin (1995) use the names: interviewees, informants, conversational partners. People participating in qualitative interview are the partners rather than objects of the study and therefore the names: interviewee, participant, student or conversational partner will be most suitable and applied in this study (ibid).

The character of relationship between a researcher and the conversational partner has been frequently underlined in the literature on qualitative interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Dalen, 2011). The interviewer should not keep distance and neutral attitude towards the interviewee. Since the expectations of the in-depth interviewing are to make the participants to be open and talk freely about their life, it is not suitable and does not help to gain their trust by being “closed and interpersonal” at the same time (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 12). The authors (ibid) add that it is neither appropriate nor simple to keep neutrality in qualitative research. As opposed to that, they the role of empathy has been emphasized with the indication of the need to keep the reasonable line between too much emotional involvement, which can have blinding effect on the researcher, and being unsympathetic or detached (ibid).

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview

When planning an interview study, one can distinguish between four types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, informal and retrospective (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviewing was applied. The advantage of this type of interview is the fact that it resembles everyday conversation, but at the same time has a clear purpose and involves specific techniques used by the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are based on the interview guides, which comprise the most central themes that the researcher wants to address, and the more specific questions relating to each theme (ibid). The semi-structured interviews have been recommended in the studies where similar information obtained from different people should be later compared. In this study, the answers obtained from the participants were compared in order to see the similarities between the perceptions of the same topic and finding the salient points in the answers of the interviewees.

The advantage of choosing semi-structured interviews for this study was that they allow for some degree of freedom, and in this way give the interview more relaxed, chat-like character, rather than resembling an interrogation. Moreover, it has been stated that closed interviews with concrete formulated questions may sometimes lead to question-answer situation, where the answers from the interviewees are narrowed down to very specific areas of the topic under investigation (Kvale, 1997). It has been recommended that the researcher needs to be open to new ideas and perspectives coming from the interviewees, instead of keeping in mind presupposed fixed ideas about the phenomenon and its interpretation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, the guide used in this thesis included the main ideas and examples of narrowed questions referring to these ideas. These themes referred to:

- difficulties in learning English
- emotional factors accompanying these difficulties
- the role of the teacher in learning process and in shaping the learning experiences of the students

Under each of these themes some guiding questions were formulated. However, there is big freedom in sequence and the way these questions were asked in each interview. One does not have to use exactly the same order and wording when posing the questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.124).

3.2.3 Interview guide

The interview guide in this study served as a framework for the areas to be covered in the interviews (Appendix 11). The interview questions were formulated on the basis of the research topic and the literature about dyslexia.

In designing the interview guide, the recommendations suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Dalen (2011) were adapted in this research. For building rapport and trust in the first moments of the interview, the way one formulates the questions is of substantial significance (ibid). The interviews were started by asking non-threatening and easy questions, for example relating to students' interests. Afterwards, the conversation was directed towards the more central topics of the study. Finally, the interviewees were asked more general questions again in the ending point of the interview, as recommended by Dalen (2011). The

students were asked in the end for their feedback on the general impressions of being interviewed, given the opportunity for adding something that the interview questions may have missed.

3.3 Sampling

It is an important decision in the study to determine the criteria for choosing the participants that will suit the phenomena we want to examine and provide rich and relevant information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The participants in this study were chosen in purposive way and had to fulfill the specific criteria (Cohen et al., 2007). These criteria concerned the age, having the statement of dyslexia from PPT (Pedagogical Psychological Services) and having no additional disability. The reason why students with additional learning difficulties were not taken into consideration in the sampling criteria, was the confusion it would pose in distinguishing between the problems and experiences caused by dyslexia, and those which could be the result of the additional impairment.

The study focused on students from secondary schools (videregående skole) and the choice was dictated by the fact that many students get diagnosed as late as in the end of junior high school, or even later. Therefore, it was a higher probability to find more students with diagnosis in secondary schools. I preferred to present the voice of students rather than adults because it was important to get the fresh experiences of how they have it at school at present, and at the same time to get respondents who are mature enough to reflect on their experiences. Moreover, the meanings of the adults with dyslexia relating to their school experiences could change in time, and the individual whose present situation is satisfying may refer to the past unpleasant situations from school as less important and in a more positive and with distance

In choice of participants one needs to make another important decision concerning the suitable number of interviewees (Dalen, 2011). The number of participants in this study was determined by few factors. First of all, there is no doubt that qualitative interviewing provides immense amount of information which in face of the time constraints for the master thesis could be overwhelming for the researcher. Recorded interviews need to be transcribed and then analyzed. On the other hand, it should be recognized that not each individual will be equally eager to provide expanded answers to the study questions. Therefore, the amount of six participants was regarded as sufficient for this study.

Kvale (1996) recommends to “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p.113). However, as he further notifies “if the number of objects is too large, there will hardly be time to make penetrating analyses of the interviews” (ibid, p. 113).

Moreover, the number of participants is determined by the purpose of the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This study was not designed with the intention of receiving statistical data, and the number of six students was reasonable in order to get a rich perspective on the studied phenomenon in the time frames provided by the university. I did not specify preferences regarding the sex of the participants, but in the end I received a response from four girls and two boys.

Because of the hindrances in getting the participants through the schools, I referred to Dyslexia Norway (Dysleksi Norge), which is a non-profit organization for people with dyslexia in Norway. I immediately received positive answer from the administration who agreed to help me to find participants. After publishing an announcement on their website I got one email from a girl who wanted to participate in the study. Because she lived far from Oslo, our meeting demanded planning and good deal of travelling. After the interview, I asked her for help in finding another participant willing to take part in the research. Already, the next day I received a message from one of her friends who was eager to take part in the study. In this way I already had four participants. However, I felt that I still need more information and I tried to find more respondents. Once again I asked for help from Dyslexia Organization and after some weeks I managed to get another two volunteers.

3.4 Pilot testing of the interview guide

Before meeting the first participant the pilot testing of the interview guide was conducted. It did not contribute to any substantial changes in the interview guide. However, it helped me to practice my skills as an interviewer, which has been recommended to be done before approaching the real situation (Dalen, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). It has been also recognized as a helpful tool in verifying whether the questions are well formulated, how the interviewee may react on sensitive topics, or to see how much time it takes to cover all the issues and get rich answers to all questions we expect to explore (Maxwell, 2013). In this regard I conducted an interview with a friend who has been diagnosed with dyslexia. The interview was useful in raising my awareness about the importance of leaving some time for the interviewees to think

and reflect on their answers. After listening to the recording, I could easily notice how often I was trying to avoid longer pauses from the participant by trying to reformulate the question. As Kvale says (1996), it is important to give the informants time to think over the question. Moreover, I interrupted few times before the interviewee finished speaking, which I didn't realize during the interviewing situation. This made me cautious of the mistakes I was doing and this experience made the following interviews more successful. The feedback I got concerned the two of the questions which the interviewee said were ambiguous. I also got some extra tips and ideas to add some more questions which could be relevant. Some questions were reformulated to encourage more reflections from the participants and avoid yes-no answers. This concerned questions like: "Do you remember any unpleasant situation from English classes?", which can easily be avoided by an interviewer by saying "no". I changed this type of questions to: "What is the most unpleasant situation from English classes that you remember from school?"

3.5 Conducting the interviews

The process of data collection started in October with the last interview conducted in mid-November. The meetings took place in different locations suggested by the interviewees in order to make them feel more comfortable and confident. Despite the wish of meeting each of the participants twice, most of them had busy schedules. The waiting time for each interview was from one week to even one month and involved some travelling outside of Oslo. The two of the participants chose to meet at their school near Oslo. With the rest of the participants I agreed on meeting in café or pizzeria. This brought a positive effect on the interviews, in making the situations less formal; but also impacted slightly on the quality of the recordings because of the background noise. However, too intimate atmosphere in a small café would not be good either as the interviewees might be intimidated to talk about their experiences if people around could overhear the conversation. The length of each interview varied from 50 minutes to 1,5 hour. With two of the informants I met twice because I had questions that I needed to clear up after listening to the tape and transcribing the interviews. In case of the first interview, it took 1,5h but not all of the important topics were covered. In the second one, the situation was just opposite and the interviewee was not so open in talking about his experiences and therefore a lot of information was missing as well.

The students were given the opportunity to talk about their general experiences with learning English without the interviewer guiding them to any specific topics in the beginning. They were usually eager to share their thoughts and often covered many questions from the interview guide, even before they were posed. However, the students were referring primarily to specific situations from school without talking about their feelings evoked by these situations and they had to be asked directly about the meaning and emotional consequences of these situations.

Even though, there were a lot of similarities in responses to the same question, there was at times some variety of answers and reactions. Each person brought something new and enriched the study data with their unique, personal and very interesting insights of their lives. Although the same interview guide was applied in every meeting, the participants focused on these aspects of the topics, which they found most important and relevant to their situation.

Each meeting in this study was recorded on the tape in order to allow for full concentration and engagement in the conversation. Audio recorders give another advantage by allowing the researcher to hear the tone, articulation, breathing, pauses in speech and come back to the recording whenever it is needed, which would not be possible by only note taking (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis comprises specific stages which involve the reduction of the research data, data display and drawing a conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1984). As formulated by Miles and Huberman (1984), it aims at “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the “raw” data” (p. 21). The authors claim that data reduction is a process that starts even before one begins to collect data. It involves choosing the questions one wants to ask, or by deciding on the theoretical frameworks and approaches to data collection (ibid.). When the actual process of data collection begins, the reduction of data is performed through coding. Data reduction process is followed by a next step of analysis which is data display and which Miles and Huberman define (1984) as “an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion-drawing and action taking” (p. 21). The analysis process according to Kvale (1999) includes the interpretations of interviewees’ behaviour, physical reactions and listening to their responses which already brings some ideas (ibid).

3.6.1 Transcribing the interviews

For closer analysis and interpretation of the information obtained under the interviews, it is necessary to transcribe the conversations. This is in itself a part of analysis, and taking into account many factors like recording quality, researcher's typing skills or how detailed one wants to make it, this may be very time consuming (Kvale, 2006).

Transcribing straight after the interviews helped to remember still fresh memories regarding the signs which are not possible to hear on tape, like smiles or blushing. I met two of the interviewees twice, therefore the amount of eight interviews was left for transcribing. It was a time consuming and sometimes exhausting process, which should be an argument for transcribing straight away, rather than being left with all the gathered material to transcribe at once. The time space between each interview was usually minimum 1 week which gave me necessary time to gather the thoughts and ideas for the next interview.

After the interviews were transcribed, the more focused analysis process began. In addition, the use of a journal served for recording the thoughts after each interview, summing up the main points and information received, as well as coming up with new ideas for the forthcoming interviews. It is a helpful method as one can already understand some patterns and connection, or maybe differences which come up in the next interview (Kvale, 2006). It should also help to reflect on what the researcher needs to clarify in the next interview, as well as may suggest some modifications in the interview guide. As Kvale argues (2006), work-journal can be helpful in the process of analysis by providing "a frame for understanding and reflecting on the processes and changes in the knowledge production throughout an interview inquiry" (p.113).

3.6.2 Hermeneutics and phenomenology

In the analysis of data material the hermeneutical approach was utilized. The central importance in hermeneutics has been given to the interpretation of the meaning of what one hears or reads (Kvale, 2006). It would be practically impossible to describe how students with dyslexia experience their English learning without interpreting of what they said. From hermeneutic viewpoint, our life and the way we understand it are contextual. The use of hermeneutic approach enables the understanding of the deeper meaning of the information obtained from the interviewees. This means that the interviewer needs to involve the context

in order to get a real understanding of the received message (Dalen, 2011). However, the understanding of the interview information does not only involve seeking the understanding of each part by placing it in the bigger context, but also looking for the small sections (examples) which suit the whole. This is what the researchers call the hermeneutic circle (ibid). It means that one cannot understand the texts neither by the whole of the text nor by its individual parts unless making the references to one another (ibid).

In addition to hermeneutics, I found it relevant to address phenomenological interpretation in this study. Phenomenology is not only a research approach, but also a philosophy that aims at gaining an understanding of the world from the informants' viewpoint, and the way they experience it (Kvale, 2006). This lived world is an important element in both phenomenology and hermeneutics (ibid). Phenomenology is focusing mostly on how the research participants experience the world they live in and the phenomena they are part of, and this is how the phenomenological researcher presents the data (Kvale, 2006). In this way, the reader gets a deeper insight into the life world of the research participants (ibid). Hermeneutics in addition, draw attention to the interpretation of the meanings expressed by the interviewees and in this sense these two approaches are in my understanding suitable and combine well together. Phenomenology is therefore underlying the importance of trying to understand the world through the eyes of our respondents, seeing and understanding their perspective, and assuming that the significant is what our participants say it to be (ibid).

Furthermore, phenomenological researcher is looking for similarities in how different people perceive related situations and these “commonalities of perception” are called the essence of the experience (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

3.6.3 Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 57, as cited in Dalen, 2011) define coding as “the operation by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways”. Coding is not only about assigning a label to a phrase, sentence or fragment of discourse but also is used for linking the ideas: “It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 137). The coding process can help to see the patterns and from these patterns to build categories (ibid).

The codes applied in the study served as a tool for developing the key categories, and at the same time making the rich data material clustered into smaller pieces, and therefore facilitating easier analysis. Codes help to see how different interviewees related to the same concept and can vary according to the level of analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Therefore, one can apply descriptive codes, which do not include interpretation but only certain segmentation of an analyzed text. It is also recommended to use interpretive code or go even further and utilize explanatory codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A part of the codes in this study was created before the beginning of analysis, some were based on the research questions, and others invented and applied later in the process of analysis. One can also develop codes on the basis of those invented and applied by another researcher's in relative study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The coding method recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995) was applied in this study, and the first step was thorough rereading of the transcribed interviews in order to get the general picture of the data material. During the second reading, the focus was on the themes and concepts that were planned in advance and reflected in the questions in the interview guide. The specific code was therefore applied each time it occurred in the text. While reading and marking off the themes planned beforehand, some new emerging concepts were marked as well. Therefore, the new codes were added but at the same time there was a need to reread the original transcript and code the fragments of material which "now belongs to the new categories" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 239). After the coding process was finished, the data were put together according to the categories in order to get a clearer picture of what different students said about the same theme and how they make a meaning of different concepts. The material was then compared within the categories and across them.

3.7 The validity and reliability of the study

The issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research have evoked a lot of controversy and been the subject of a hot debate between the researchers (Maxwell, 2013). Some scholars claim that addressing reliability and validity is not necessary and even irrelevant in the qualitative studies (ibid). Others, including Kvale (2006) suggest redefining the terms for the purpose of the qualitative approach, but do not abandon the idea of addressing them completely. Dalen (2011) supports the need for reliability and validity to be defined but with

the use of criteria different from those used by quantitative researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Kvale, 2006) suggested alternative terms for addressing issues of quality of the study, such as trustworthiness, credibility or dependability.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that in quantitative study the issue of reliability relates to the consistency of the obtained data. It concerns the issue of whether the research findings would be approximately the same if two researchers investigated the same phenomenon with the use of the same procedures of data collection and analysis. However, this criterion cannot be fully fulfilled by qualitative researcher where the information obtained during the interviews depends on the researcher, their interviewing skills, the rapport built between the researcher and participants and many other factors. What is more, as Dalen argues further (2011), both the participants and their life situations may change which makes it more difficult to interview the same participants over some period of time and expect the same results. Therefore, as recommended the issue of reliability was addressed in this study by giving as accurate a picture as possible when describing the procedures of the whole research process in order to enable a reader or “another researcher (to) take on the same researcher glasses of a hypothetical implementation of the project” (Dalen, 2011, p. 47). Rubin and Rubin (1995) call it transparency, and recommend the use of detailed explanations of the research procedures including the steps of sampling, data collection and even presentation of the original transcripts of the interviews. However, presenting the original transcriptions in this study could pose a threat on the participants’ identities to be recognized, and therefore the interview guide was regarded as sufficient information for the purpose of the current study.

Another common issue concerning reliability in interview studies is the fact that the researcher can influence the answers through the way they formulate the question, for example by asking leading questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, leading questions can sometimes be used consciously with the purpose of checking the consistency of the story told by the participants, or to verify our interpretations of the answers we get (ibid). This is the reason for the use of leading questions in this study.

The participants in the present study were consistent in their responses and stories they told during the interviews. They were frequently asked for explanations which was necessary to avoid any misunderstandings since the Norwegian language is not my mother tongue. It has been claimed that certain practices like summing up of what the interviewees said, interpreting and asking clarifying questions are important to avoid ambiguities and doubts in

the process of analysis, especially when there is no possibility to meet the respondent again. Moreover, this questioning may be a signal for the interviewee that the researcher has a genuine interest and pays attention to what is being said (Kvale, 2006).

It has been suggested that reliability “is a necessary precondition of validity, and validity may be a sufficient but not necessary condition for reliability” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133).

Maxwell (2013) claims that validity is the central issue in research and refers to the words of And Bosk (1979, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 122) who said: “All fieldwork done by a single fieldworker invites the question, Why should we believe it?”

Despite the fact, that applying specific procedures does not automatically warrant validity, they are still important for eliminating the threats to validity, and at the same enhance the credibility of the findings (Maxwell, 2013).

Validity refers to the truth and the correctness of the presented material and drawn conclusions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It can be addressed through in-depth and rich data material, data triangulation and objectivity (Winter, 2000, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Some researchers have claimed that intensive and personal involvement of the researcher, together with the rich and broad information given by the participants, create a satisfactory basis for validity (Cohen et al., 2007). This view, however, has been challenged by several researchers and there have been currently a variety of categories for addressing validity among the scholars (ibid). In this study the categories were based on those suggested by both Maxwell (1992) and Miles and Huberman (1994) which were most relevant to this study.

The first type of validity that will be mentioned is *descriptive validity*. It points to the importance of the factual presentation of the information gathered under the interviews, which refers to presenting the facts that are truthful and not manipulated by the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The information should be accurate and precise, not selective, mis-transcribed or made up by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007). To strengthen the descriptive validity in this research, a lot of citations and words literally said by the participants were used.

Moreover, if a researcher wants to make sure that what is presented reflects what was actually said by the interviewee, it has been recommended to use a tape recorder, which was done in this study (Kvale, 2006).

Additionally, the process of transcribing is important when referring to validity and all the information should be transcribed without selecting what seems to be most important (Maxwell, 2013). Thanks to the use of tape recorder in the study, I could go through the material as many times as it was necessary to make sure that I understood every single word. There were no bigger problems in understanding the material as the quality of recordings was good, with one exception of the interview which needed some extra work and attention because of the background noise in the recording.

It is also worth mentioning that the way one presents data, may often be affected by one's subjectivity and therefore it is important that the researcher reflexes on the possible biases he or she can bring to the study before starting interviewing (ibid). If the researcher is doing a study on a topic which is very close to his or her experiences, it can affect the research and its validity. My personal experience with dyslexia is rather limited and I do not have learning disability myself, therefore I felt that my personal experiences could not pose any bigger threat to creating bias in the study.

The next term used for describing validity is *interpretative validity* (Maxwell, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The aim of this study was to go beyond the descriptions of the situations presented by the interviewees by additionally trying to understand what meanings they had for the participants (ibid). These meanings are not directly derived from the data, but rather depend on the way the researcher interprets and describes them (ibid). This issue was addressed in the current study by using the citations for strengthening the validity of the interpretations made by the researcher. Moreover, a number of follow up questions during each interview were asked in order to make sure that the thoughts and understanding of what the students meant was right. Another important way to address interpretative validity is called as "member checking", which means that a researcher sends his interpretation to one or more of the interviewees to hear their opinions and explain possible misunderstandings. The two of the interviewees agreed on providing this feedback. Moreover, two of the interviewees were asked for another meeting as a lot of issues arose from the data that needed to be clarified and to make sure that the interpretations of the conversation were correct.

The third concept for validity is *theoretical validity*. It refers to the theories that the researcher uses in order to explain the phenomena, and whether the theoretical background used in the study is relevant to the questions asked in the study and the gathered material (ibid). In order to give the reader an opportunity to get an understanding of the central themes of the study,

and the interpretation of the data, the relevant theories were presented in the second chapter of the study.

One more term that that Maxwell (1992) and several other scholars have referred to is *generalizability* (Fraenkel et al., 2012). It has been claimed that it is a limitation of a qualitative study that “there is seldom methodological justification for generalizing the findings of a particular study” (ibid, p. 440). However, the authors argue that it is still possible to generalize in the qualitative research. This generalizing, however, can be done by the readers who can identify themselves with the study participants, who have been in similar situations or felt the same about particular experiences. The authors continue by saying that it is not the researchers themselves, but the readers “who judge the applicability of the researcher’s findings and conclusions, who determine whether the researcher’s findings fit his or her situation” (ibid, p.437). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) express similar attitude and say that we do not have to questions whether the findings can be applied globally, but rather “whether the knowledge produced in a specific interview situation may be transferred to other relevant situations” (p. 262).

Applying this knowledge to the current study, because of the small number of participants the results cannot be generalized globally to the whole population of Norwegian students with dyslexia, but the study can be generalized by the students who after reading the study can associate their situation to the one presented by any of the research participants. In reference to generalizability, it is also important to use good sampling criteria and find the informant who will provide us with deep and rich data. I am satisfied with the richness of responses that I received from the interviewees, and all of them brought a lot of interesting and individual ideas to the study.

3.8 Ethical issues

There are specific guidelines that each researcher needs to follow in order to produce a study that does not violate the moral code. The ethical considerations in this study followed the recommendations presented in the Norwegian ethical guidelines (NESH, 2011).

The research involving human participants is said to always include some kind of confidential information, and consequently it is expected that one should search for permission before starting the research. Therefore, before contacting the interviewees, I sent my research

proposal to Norwegian ethical review board (NSD). The study was approved in the end of July 2012 (Attachment 1).

There have been four types of ethics suggested and defined by David Flinders (1992, as cited in Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The first type is utilitarian ethics which involves the assessment of the morality of the researcher's decisions by anticipating their possible consequences. The second term refers to deontological ethics, where researcher makes decisions and takes actions which follow the absolute ideals, such as honesty, respect, or justice. The following kind of ethics was called relational ethics, and defines the judgments of the morality of the research based on the caring attitude towards other people, in particular the research participants. Finally, Flinders (ibid) refers to ecological ethics, where judgments of morality of the researcher's decisions are made on the basis of the culture and the wider environmental context surrounding the participant.

The judgment of the decisions and actions for this study was guided by the combination of all of these issues. Each stage of the research may provoke some ethical concerns, for example when choosing the data collection methods, planning the interview questions, the nature of the information one needs to get access to, and what will be done with the information gathered in the study (Cohen et al. 2007). The ethical problems in qualitative interview research stem from the nature of study in itself when one attempts to investigate somebody's private life and then "place these accounts in public arena" (Birch et al., 2001, as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.62).

The moral issues relating particularly to qualitative research interviewing, differ from those that the researcher using quantitative instruments of data collection, may find relevant (ibid). In surveys, the answers and information given by respondents is presented in the form of numbers, percentages and averages. In interviews on the other hand, the individual responses are important and their statements are often literally presented by quoting their answers (ibid). Therefore, the caution was given not to include any details, or information that would reveal the identity of the participants in this study.

The richness and the nature of information the researcher receives are strongly dependent on the relationship he or she builds with the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore two interviewers conducting the study based on the same interview guide may gain different answers or different depth of answer from the same respondent (ibid). This in turn has been

said to lead to the ethical issue of balancing between the desire for getting as much information as possible, and the respect for participant's feelings, privacy and emotional condition (ibid). It is essential to know how not to cross the line by, for example, making remarks or posing questions in a way that is inappropriate or misunderstood by the participant. As Sennett (2004, as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) says, we need to find a balance as "the craft consists in calibrating social distances without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope" (p.91).

One of the most critical elements in addressing the moral principles is by providing the participants with the sufficient information before getting the consent for their involvement (Cohen, et al, 2007). The participants in this study received a letter which included the information about the purpose of the study, the nature of information that it aims to find, the way their personal information will be protected and the way the data will be used (Appendix 4). It has been written in the Norwegian ethical guidelines that the participants need to make their own judgment based on the information about the type of research, what is expected from them and what will happen to the information they will come up with, before they make their decision about the participation. It is very important to make sure that the participation is voluntary and therefore, the letter included the information about the possibility to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences and without giving a reason (NESH, 2011).

The information was repeated orally before the interview and the participants were asked additionally about their permission for recording the interviews on the tape, which none of them had any objections to.

Furthermore, the principles of ethics in research say that a researcher has the responsibility to protect the participants from any harm or other serious strains, psychological or physical in nature (ibid). The only possible harm that was anticipated in this study was the exposure to psychological restraints, as some of the experiences may be very sensitive and personal for students and therefore difficult to talk about. Therefore, the students were informed beforehand that the study would concern their feelings and personal experiences. In case of finding any question too personal or emotional, the interviewees were not pushed into giving an answer if they did not want to do it themselves.

The possibility of negative consequences for the research participants were addressed in the study as well. Some of the students were concerned about being exposed to their teachers and

therefore they were assured about the confidentiality. To avoid judgment from the teacher whom they were talking about, or from the fellow students, all of the personal information was kept in privacy and the real names were changed already in the transcriptions. The information from the participants was presented in such a way that it does not reveal too much information that would reveal the identity of the participants. The recordings were stored in a place unavailable to anyone else apart from the researcher, and deleted after the completion of the writing process. The transcriptions of the interviews were stored on the personal computer protected by password and available only to the researcher. The printed transcripts were shredded immediately after the work was completed in June 2013.

4 Data presentation

The following chapter will present the results of the data analysis. The data will be organized in a thematic way according to the three central issues of the research, which were formulated in the form of sub-questions. As previously mentioned, the present study was designed to explore the experiences of students with dyslexia learning the English language. The three sub-questions focused on: English language difficulties, the emotional responses to these difficulties, and the role of teacher's pedagogy in facilitating or hindering their learning achievement, and impacting on their experiences of learning situations.

These themes will be further divided into sub-themes each. The sub-themes were generated on the basis of the existing theories, as well as emerged from the students' responses. The data will be presented by the descriptions of the findings, but also supported by the direct quotations of students' responses. The short background information about each of the participants is provided for enhanced understanding of their reflections (Appendix 8).

4.1 English language difficulties

Each of the participants in the present study points English as the most, or second most difficult school subject. However, not for everyone the struggles in learning English make it the most disliked subject at the same time, and surprisingly enough, for Anne it is one of the favourite subjects:

"I didn't like English before but now I do because now I have motivation and I can see the reasons why I want to learn it. And it is not about the subject but about the teachers, and what they have done to me...English is the most difficult school subject together with Norwegian. But it is one of my favourite subjects now, but when I had those other teachers then I didn't like it at all".

Anne, just like the rest of the interviewees, mentions motivation as the factor which makes a hard and challenging subject an enjoyable and interesting one at the same time. Moreover, the quotation shows that the attitude to learning shifts to more positive as impacted by the English teacher.

Despite the fact that all of the interviewees experience learning English to be very challenging, only Marete accepted the offer of being exempted from the English classes in the

junior high school. The rest of the students feel that English skills are very important in one's adult life in increasing their job prospects, making it easier to communicate when travelling abroad, or being a common requirement for many universities. However, apart from Anne, nobody describes their motivation to learning English as being the result of the genuine interest in the culture and the language.

When it comes to the difficulties experienced in learning English at school, there is a big variation and combination in the answers provided by the interviewees. However, the salient points emerging from the descriptions of these challenges will be presented in the following part of the thesis.

4.1.1 Writing

One of the most frequently mentioned responses about the struggles in learning English is the mastery of writing. Even though, not for each student it is posing a top challenge in learning, all of the interviewees point it as one of the biggest difficulties. What makes writing in English problematic is according to the participants the spelling. As they explain, what one can hear is hardly ever written in the same way in English. This is how two of the respondents described it:

"I know how to write in general, but in English it's like my hand doesn't know how to get it down to the paper, how to write words down to the paper, so I just write as I hear it"(Anne, 16).

"It is because the words in English, they are written in so completely different way than when you hear them, so it will be always two different things for me. I always write as I hear it and it is never correct" (Oda).

The students experience spelling to be a big challenge and they usually write the words the way they are pronounced. This results in problems with understanding their own writing, but also poses similar trouble for the teacher during the assessment of the written assignments. When having a word in its written form, the students are not able to associate it with its meaning, since they are not always capable of reading it with the correct pronunciation. The interviewees express their irritation in writing situations, as they feel that their heads are full of ideas which they are not able to put down on the paper. The grades they receive from the

written tasks are often below the average score in the classroom. The teachers' focus is mostly on the spelling rather than the content, and therefore what the students frequently receive back is the paper full of red corrections.

Some of the students mention mixing similar-looking letters like: b and d, t and f or give the examples of particular words which are very hard to spell. Writing longer texts in the classroom is also mentioned as a big challenge and a highly dreaded activity. For those of the participants who feel especially anxious before the written exams, the additional fear is the lack of the necessary time. The frequent statement from the participants is that they need more time than their peers in order to finish writing their essay in the classroom. Making up a story is not as big a problem as putting it down to the paper without making too many spelling mistakes and keeping the writing legible. Each interviewee expresses the need for additional time for writing and proofreading their papers, which is far from what they are offered by their teachers. Terje, for example, states that when he has to write an essay he wants to quickly write down his ideas as he happens to forget them quickly. However, after he is finished writing and starts proofreading he finds it is impossible to understand what he has written. The handwriting is not legible, the words misspelled and he cannot remember what was meant when he wrote it. All of the participants, with exception of Oda, say that without a laptop they would never manage to get through all the challenges with spelling. Therefore the possibility of using the computer during the English lessons offers a completely different learning quality. Silje expresses it the following way:

“Getting a pc was a life-saviour, it opened a completely new world for me. Finally I could express myself the way I really wanted to. When I was using a pen it was not possible since I wrote so many mistakes that when I got the paper back it was just whole red of corrections. So the pc was a big rescue and I don't know where I would have been today if I didn't get that help, maybe I would drop out from school”.

The interviewees say that some of their schools offered help in the form of the free pc and the necessary writing programmes. Terje, Silje and Marete use special programmes, like LingRight or Cd-Ord which they all find very helpful.

4.1.2 Reading

Another frequently mentioned hinder in acquiring English skills is reading. The degree of reading problems that the participants express varies from one saying that she “could read a

text thousand times without understanding it”, to another person saying that reading is not a big problem and she even tries to read English literature in her spare time. However, the rest of the interviewees describe reading process in English as long and tiring one:

“First you focus on single letters in order to put them together, then you have to make sense of this block of letters and then read it correct. And it goes like this with the next word and the one after. But then you cannot remember the word you read before and the general sense of the whole text” (Peter).

Reading in English is described as tiring and time consuming. It takes around two to three, or for some participants even four times to read the text before understanding its meaning.

Marete describes reading in English as a skill that she has not managed to master up to now. What makes reading slightly easier for her, is to find some interesting text, but it relates only to Norwegian literature, where she is able to understand the text after re-reading it twice or three times. When it comes to English texts, however, she finds it virtually impossible. She “could read it thousand times and not understand because (she) doesn’t know the words and what they mean”.

Each individual in the study expresses their wish for being able to read English literature for pleasure, however for most of them it is out of the question. The students say that it takes substantial re-reading of every single page of the book. Moreover, when focusing on the single words in the sentence to understand their meaning, they eventually forget them before getting to the end of the sentence, and consequently cannot derive the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Additionally, the students say that using the constant use of dictionary makes reading frustrating and takes away the pleasure of reading. One of the interviewees tells me:

“You know, it’s not much fun to read a book if you have to focus on every word and check it up in the dictionary and then when you get back to the text, you don’t remember what you read in the first place. So I would have to read one page like 3 times. So I don’t read at all, even though I would like to. I just buy audiobooks instead”.

Similar attitude is expressed by Peter who says that if he did not have dyslexia, he could read books and make it enjoyable way of spending free time. He also mentions problems with reading the subtitles while watching a movie in English, as it poses a big challenge to read the text fast enough to follow the movie at the same time.

Anne, Oda and Marete say that the common problem for them is seeing the connection between the written word and its sound. Therefore, when coming across a written expression, the students may be unaware that they know its meaning because they were familiar only with the pronunciation, not the written form of that word. This is a very common problem and confusing experience describe by the interviewees. This is how Peter talks about it:

“I read a word and don’t understand what it means even though I know this word. I know that I recognize it but suddenly I don’t know what it means. So I ask somebody to read it for me and then I understand it”.

The students in the current study feel that their reading problems pose substantial hinder in learning process, since reading is a very important element during their English classes and usually it constitutes a considerable part of the lesson. The students are frequently asked to read aloud in the classroom, do individual reading and do the comprehension tasks afterwards, or read a piece of text in front of the class when having a drama performance.

The participants find their reading performance very weak in comparison to their peers. The fact that they are constantly corrected by the teacher makes them aware of how many mistakes they actually make during the reading activity. It happens regularly that they have to stop in the middle of a sentence when encountering a more difficult or unfamiliar word. They usually have to depend on the help of a student sitting next to them.

4.1.3 Visual problems

Two of the students mentioned visual problems that they face during reading, which makes it very tiresome and difficult activity. They usually describe their visual problems as the perception of the motion of the written content, the feeling that the letters are switching places, jumping around or vibrating. Peter says that it happens to him that *“the eyes kind of go back and forth and the words disappear and the letters are changing places or suddenly disappearing”*. This makes reading not only very tiring but also confusing and makes it difficult to concentrate. Terje, just like Peter, mentions the problem of letters moving on the paper or disappearing. However, since he got diagnosis of dyslexia quite early, he received the necessary help and recollects the time when he used special glasses for reading which he found very helpful in his primary school years. The students say that they do not have visual problems when reading from the computer.

4.1.4 Memory

Problems with memorizing new information is reported as another difficulty associated with dyslexia (T.R. Miles, 1993, Snowling, 2000) and expressed by the students in the current study. The interviewees express difficulties with remembering all the new words from one lesson to another, but some also find it challenging to remember and follow what the teacher says, recall what they are expected to do for the next class or memorizing the deadlines. Additionally, learning words off by heart is very long process for each of the students. The reason is both the amount of words that they are expected to learn in a short time, but also the fact they have to learn the spelling, not only the pronunciation and the meaning. The students described learning new words as a very long process of reading and writing the same word several times. Anne however, puts a lot of creative ideas and uses some special methods that she has learnt, such as drawing smiles in “o”, using variety of colours to write the words, or singing the words to memorize them, making a rhyme or a story which as she says helps to “*see in my head, later I can see the pictures in my head and the colours and the O with a smile*”. The other participant reflects on her methods applied during the exams:

“Ok, I didn’t manage to remember every single letter in that word, so I am like: ok it starts with this letter and ends with that letter and there are for example two letters left in the middle so I’m trying to guess” (Terje).

The rest of the interviewees, however, do not employ any particular methods, and rote memorization of new words involves usually the use of countless pieces of paper and the long process of re-writing the same word numerous times.

4.1.5 Speaking

When it comes to the oral skills, each student apart from Marete, finds it least serious among the problems in English language learning. However, most of the students recognize oral presentations as one of the bigger challenges in the classroom. They say it does not stem from the weaknesses in their oral skills, but rather from the fact that they are shy and afraid of making a mistake. Having experienced many failures in their English learning process, they are nervous to attract negative attention and risk being ridiculed in the eyes of their teacher and peers. However, the oral skills per se are reported as the element of the language which most of the participants feel strongest about. All of the students say that the reason for their

oral skills being better than reading or writing performance is due to the exposure to television rather than teacher's contribution. Two of the participants mention additionally the importance of travelling abroad where they are forced into the authentic situations which demand the use of the language. Terje expresses his view that oral element of the language learning is the only way he can compensate for poor reading or writing skills. Anne enjoys speaking English as well, and during the interview wants to use English instead of Norwegian.

4.1.6 Listening

Listening is among the skills that most of the interviewees feel strong about, and explain it once again as the positive influence of the television or computer games. They prefer to hear somebody reading the text for them in order to get the understanding of its meaning, rather than having to do it themselves. Three of the students mention that it is very helpful when their parents read for them the homework or a text in English. Only then they can understand it better and without using so much time and energy. Moreover, the participants declare that English movies facilitate the expansion of their vocabulary. Therefore, they wish there was more elements of film screening in the classroom.

There is no doubt that every participant in this study experience learning of English as a very challenging process which craves hard work and lots of effort. In the next part, the emotional responses accompanying the challenges in learning English will be presented.

4.2 The emotional responses to the difficulties in learning English

It has been documented that students with dyslexia may develop poor self-esteem and lower motivation in face of the difficulties and failures they experience (Riddick, 1996). All of the participants in the study recollect the moments when they felt bad about themselves and doubted their own skills and intelligence. The most common feelings which accompany their experiences of learning English, is the feeling of being different, lonely, judged and stupid. As a consequence of their negative experiences, they suffered with low self-esteem, lack of motivation, frustration and anxiety. However, these feelings seem not to be the direct effect of the difficulties the students have experienced. It is rather the combination of the difficulties

and the responses to these difficulties from their English teachers and peers. The pedagogical strategies used by the teachers, their attitude towards the students, understanding and respect have been reported in this study as having great significance for the students' own perceptions of their difficulties.

The feelings that the participants express are mainly due to the two reasons: the fear that their struggles can be seen by the others (peers and the teacher) and the intrinsic feeling of personal failure. The following part will present the themes which describe the emotional factors accompanying the students' difficulties and the typical situations contributing to these emotional reactions.

4.2.1 Being seen and judged by others

The fear of being judged by the teacher or peers is experienced mostly in the situations of using the language in front of the class. Therefore, the students are usually anxious to use English in front of the others, as they lack the confidence in their own abilities. The way they are seen by their peers and the teacher, as well as the possible danger of being ridiculed, are frequently mentioned. Terje recollects on his primary school years by saying: *"I know they probably thought that I was stupid but you know, for them it was odd that I couldn't manage on my own something that was so easy for them"*.

Silje says that it has always been stressful for her to use the language in the classroom: *"I've always dreaded English class. I feel so nervous to speak loud, I am scared to say a mistake and then everybody will laugh. I have never experienced that people were laughing but I am scared that it can happen"*.

Another participant reflects on the first year of her secondary school:

"I was anxious before the classes, it was absolutely horrible, I just wanted to go home. I was so very scared since I was so bad at English. I was scared that I will have to read the homework, really scared of that, I was scared that I will have to tell what the task was about. It is because I read so many mistakes, everyone else reads so much better than me. It happens that I have to read and then I read very slowly but still I make so many mistakes and then everyone is just looking at me"(Marete).

Four of the participants say that they feel anxiety even a day before the class starts. One of them experiences stronger physical reactions of anxiety, sweating, crying in the sleep or stomach pain. Being involved in the situations where using the language is necessary is perceived as a threat that may expose their problems and embarrass them in front of the others. The fear of being perceived as stupid by peers, or hearing critique from the teacher, is common for everyone in the study, despite the fact that some of the students have never experienced that before. Oda, describes the same fear of being looked upon as dumb and being laughed at. She has experienced it during the reading situation in another school and this past experience evokes anxiety and fear of similar situation happening in the future.

The students wish they could prevent their weaknesses from being exposed. Anne, for example, said:

"I do not read so much in the classroom. I hate to read aloud. My feeling is that people stare at me and talk when I am reading. It always makes me sad but also angry. I asked the teacher not to ask me to read but she still does".

Another two students recall the situation of reading aloud as a most dreadful and unpleasant. Terje describes one moment from school:

"I remember when I had to read a book and we had to pass it to another person. And when it was my turn I was really embarrassed because I was really struggling and then I got really nervous and people were just laughing and it was horrible."

However, Terje has never asked the teacher to exempt him from this activity. He justifies it by saying that this would feel even more embarrassing to be the only one who does not read and would expose his difference and problems.

The interviewees feel that the help they have received from their schools and majority of their teachers has been minimal. They feel that their problems would not be exposed to the others if they were offered more assistance and accommodations. They reflect on the different forms of help that they have been offered during their lessons. Two participants mention individual teaching with a special teacher, which takes place during the regular lessons. However, the students feel that this form of help aggravates the negativity from their peers by sending a signal that they are not like everyone else and need special help. The same reaction was evoked in some students the first time they used the computer in the classroom. Even though

they feel they could never manage without the pc, they still remember the beginnings to be tough. Being the only one using the laptop in the classroom was often met with negative comments from the peers who called it a privilege and thought it was unfair. The students wish their teachers could explain to the rest of the class why they needed to use the computer.

Terje remembers the first moment when he felt bad about his dyslexia in the classroom. Until his difficulties were invisible, he did not feel bad about himself. However, when he got special glasses that he had to use in the classroom, the feeling of being different and less smart than the rest of the class occurred in his mind. He says: *“Ok, now everyone can see it, they can see that I’m different.”*

4.2.2 Comparing themselves with other students

As seen above, the students frequently mention their peers and the way it makes them feel to see themselves to be worse than the others. It often shows up in the situations when they need more time to be finished with classroom activities. All of the students express the frustration, lack of motivation, anger and lower self-esteem as the feelings accompanying their difficulties with accomplishing classroom activities at the same time as their peers. The teachers do not adjust their tasks so that they could manage to do them in time, but instead they usually are left behind the rest of the group. Terje describes how frustrating experience it was for him and how he was trying to demonstrate to the teacher that he is able to produce a really good piece of work if only he gets the time he needs.

“I was like: all right, I will write like half a page which is very good and then 1,5 page which is just with bad spelling and grammar. I wanted to demonstrate a bit I guess because when I was focusing really hard then you could really see the difference. So I wanted to show that I really can do it if you just give me a bit of extra time and when I didn’t get it, it kind of put me off of English a bit for a while and I got angry cause it isn’t that hard for them to give me that extra time”.

The feeling of being slower and having to ask for additional time is frustrating but also negatively affects self-esteem. It makes the students start comparing themselves and their performance to their peers. This is how three of the students experienced that:

“Everyone else would finish their task very fast when I would be sitting there and focusing and struggling so hard. It made me sad and angry and I guess they would think that I was dumb because for them it was very easy but I would spend so much time on it” (Terje).

“I always knew that I was much worse than the others. I used so much time to get things done and to understand things. The worst is that people around judge you, the teacher, the students. And when all your friends around you do it so much faster and so much better than you, you start to feel dumb” (Oda)

“I used to feel very lonely sitting there alone with my pc. I got very bad self-esteem at that time. I was much worse in English than the others and I used a lot of time on stuff” (Silje).

“The worst is that the friends around you do good at school and you cannot succeed when all the others succeed and do things much better than you and you are always the last one or the one who always have to write it again. And then when they start complaining about their characters and you know that you have done so much worse, then it is frustrating and it makes me sad”(Peter).

These statements clearly indicate that the challenges the students face in acquiring English language strongly affect their self-esteem. However, they do not blame dyslexia in itself for causing these difficulties, but often mention that their teachers create additional barriers and situations which expose their weaknesses to the rest of the classroom. The students often express their anger at the teachers who created extra burden on their learning process and well-being instead of facilitating their learning achievement.

The situations where the participants feel less competent than their peers result in strong reactions especially before the diagnosis. The students often mention their feelings before and after the diagnosis. Before understanding their difficulties, they felt alone with their problems, knowing that there was something wrong but did not have a reasonable explanation. They used the words: dumb, different or stupid to describe how they felt about themselves.

4.2.3 Hard work without success

It is clear in the interviews that for keeping the motivation to learning, the students need the assurance that their hard work will yield the results. The students express a lot of frustration and negative emotions evoked by the fact that their efforts do not bring the expected outcomes. All of the participants feel that they have to put much more effort into their work than their peers, and that they spend a lot of time on homework or preparing for tests. However, the most frustrating for them is that their efforts are hardly ever reflected in their

grades and that they do not get the feeling of mastery. The participants say that getting a good grade is the best motivation and a biggest reward for their effort. They wish to experience mastery of the subject and the feeling of making progress. One failure after another affects motivation and faith in the possibility of changing their situation into something positive. This is how some of the interviewees describe it:

"I learn slower and have problems to understand words and what we have to do. I don't succeed even though I know that I work harder than the others and I study hard but still do bad on the exam. I feel dumb cause I don't succeed however hard I try and the others around me succeed without much work"(Oda).

"I know that I have to work very hard but if I get a good grade then it is ok and keeps the motivation going. But of course, it is upsetting when you put 10h work into something and you know that the guy sitting next to you will do it in maybe 2h and will get the same or almost the same grade...that's really upsetting" (Terje).

"Sometimes I get ups and downs and then I think: oh no it's too much work, I can't do it. But then if you see that your effort pays off, you know it was worth it and it keeps you motivated"(Peter).

The participants do not feel that their hard work is reflected in their grades and they get upset and frustrated that they have to invest significantly more energy and time into studying to get similar grades as their peers. However, if their hard work yields the results, their effort is acknowledged, it keeps them motivated and results in more positive attitude.

Despite the fact that the emotional reactions which accompany the students' learning difficulties in English language classroom are usually negative, three of the students in this study say that they are able to apply strategies to protect themselves from the negative emotional responses. For Terje, it was possible through finding his strengths and trying to use them in pursuing his goals. For one of the participants, being surrounded by the group of good friends and being very social was a way to forget about the negative experiences from school. Also, meeting other people with dyslexia and exchanging ideas on studying methods or just talking about their school experiences was very helpful, as well as trying to engage into a voluntary help to people with similar learning difficulties.

4.3 The role of the English teachers and their pedagogical decisions

It is evident from the interviews that the students do not get the feeling of being included in the classroom by their English teachers and experience that their needs are not taken into account in teacher's pedagogical decisions. They all have experienced some form of negativity from the teacher, which affected their learning and the way they looked at themselves as students. Under the interviews the participants talk about their experiences with the "bad" and "good" English teachers, with the clear majority of the former ones, as well as reflect on their expectations towards their English teachers. Most common issues that the interviewees relate to are: teacher's attitudes, structuring the lessons, classroom adjustments, feedback and instruction and these will be presented in the following part of this chapter.

4.3.1 The teacher needs to show understanding

The importance of understanding is emphasized by every participant in this study and seems to be the most valued quality of English teachers, for not only is it tantamount to the positive attitude of the teacher, but also is expressed in their pedagogical decisions. Some of the students use the words understanding interchangeably with: tolerant, open-minded and empathetic when they relate to the teacher who is cognizant of their challenges and therefore tries to facilitate their learning in such a way that they can succeed and feel good about themselves. As seen by the participants, the teachers who lack understanding show no tolerance for the individual differences, express interest only in the successful students and ignore the needs of those who do not fit the conventional teaching or simply do not have enough knowledge to help the students. Oda, for example, says that her teacher expects too much from her because she does not understand how hard it is for her to do the same tasks as her peers and finish them at the same time as the others.

The students express their opinion that the teacher who understands them has certain knowledge about dyslexia and therefore knows what kind of difficulties they may face, and how to help them to succeed in the classroom despite these challenges. However, every participant says that most of the English teachers they have met seemed not to have enough knowledge about dyslexia and never showed understanding. Moreover, as they say, many

teachers never proved their care and willingness to trying to understand the students, even after they explained their difficulties and asked for help:

“I had this teacher who didn’t even want to know what dyslexia is. When I said that dyslexia is this and that and that I need help with specific things, then he came to school next time and didn’t even try to do what I said. I didn’t get extra time, didn’t get adjusted tasks, nothing. I think you shouldn’t be allowed to be a teacher if you don’t care about your students and don’t even try to understand them” (Marete).

The students say that the understanding from their teachers is also expressed in the pedagogical strategies and decisions about the choice of task, organization of the lesson, adaptations of homework or assessment strategies. An understanding teacher will try to facilitate the learning of the language by coming up with necessary adaptations. What often happens in reality for some of the interviewees is that some teachers not only underestimate the need of adapted teaching, but also deprave the students from their right to learning tools, for example by forbidding them the use of computer during the lessons.

When Marete talks about her English teacher and the adapted learning, she says that a teacher who gives her the same tasks and homework as to the rest of the class is the one who does not understand her needs and does not care about her. An understanding and caring teacher, on the other hand would give her a task that is appropriate for her level of mastery so that she could have a chance to master it. Only then would she feel motivated to work hard next time.

4.3.2 The feeling of mastery and the opportunity of succeeding

The importance of succeeding is expressed many times in the interviews. The students feel that the way most of their English teachers organize the lessons, together with the choice of tasks and materials, as well as the lack of flexibility in assessment, left them with little chance of succeeding. They agree that every student needs to feel that they have a chance to succeed, to feel that their hard work will bring the expected result and that it is worth the effort. If not, their motivation can get down after some time together with self-esteem. This is how Terje talks about the importance of experiencing success in his learning process:

“I think that everybody who would be able to answer the questions would feel glad about this and get more enthusiastic and would think: ok this actually was fun because I actually know this question. I don’t believe that somebody doesn’t want to know the answer, I

believe that people who are used to failing if they suddenly get the feeling of succeeding they would say: ok this is fun, it is a good feeling”.

When talking about the factors facilitating or impeding the possibility of succeeding, an issue that the participants frequently relate to is the time necessary for finishing school work. Lack of time for finishing tasks is one of the most frequently mentioned problems by each interviewer. They expect from their teachers to either give them more time in the classroom or adapt tasks in such a way that they will manage to complete the assignments approximately the same time as their peers. The reality however is that they usually lag behind in the classroom activities, which affects their motivation and self-esteem because of the constant comparisons with their peers. Lack of time affects additionally their motivation and anxiety level before the tests as they realize that they may not manage to get a good grade unless they get more time on the test. When talking about the way that failure affects her motivation for learning English, Peter says:

“I used to be motivated to learn but it is difficult if you fail all the time. What would motivate me is to succeed more. The teacher would motivate me if he made it possible for me to succeed instead of pressing me down all the time”.

Marete says that she had some good teachers who had knowledge about dyslexia and understood her needs and therefore could help her a lot to feel accomplishment. However, she says that the majority of her teachers was not able and did not even bother to come up with necessary help. She describes it in the following words:

“A good teacher would do a task in such a way that I would manage to do it on my own. If you never succeed, never manage to get the point, it makes you feel that you can’t take it anymore. But if you instead get some point on the test that is adapted to you and even though it is very easy in comparison to the rest, it is still difficult for you and if you get the feeling that you manage it, then it makes you want working more.”

It shows that the interviewees want to feel some degree of accomplishment, and even though it may take a lot of effort, it will keep them motivated if they know that the hard work will pay off and bring the satisfactory outcomes.

One of the participants says that the worst thing about learning English when you have dyslexia is that “you never succeed however hard you try”. She also adds that if it happens that she manages to succeed and gets a good grade, it positively affects the motivation and self-esteem. However, as she later adds, it does not happen too often and therefore her

motivational boost does not last for too long. It implies that succeeding is very important for the students. The teacher who understands their needs will try to adjust the teaching materials, homework and lessons in order to enable everyone to get the feeling of succeeding and therefore enhance their learning drive and boost their self-esteem.

However, Terje is aware that it is sometimes a hard task for the teacher to adapt the tasks in such a way that everyone could succeed. He gives an example of dictation which is one of the most difficult activities for each interviewee and which, as he says, is not possible to avoid and do it orally or in any other way. However, a good and understanding teacher, according to him, would try to show empathy and understanding and make it possible to keep the student motivated. This is how one of his English teachers did it:

“He said that he understands that dictation is hard for me but everyone has to do it, but he will not focus too much on it in grading. So he was a good teacher because he understood me and he gave me an opportunity to compensate with my oral skills”.

Terje continues by describing the same teacher and the way he tried to understand his problems and focused on his strengths. He says that he always appreciated in that teacher the fact that he did not focus just on his difficulties but instead tried to find his strengths and helped him to use these strengths in order to succeed. The fact that Terje got a chance to compensate his poor writing skills with good oral skills kept him motivated even during the writing tests. He knew that he will always be able to make up for a bad grade with oral presentation.

4.3.3 The teacher should appreciate the efforts

During the interviews the participants often emphasize how much effort they put into every assignment in English classes. However, they feel that not many teachers understand that the average grade from the exam for them means lots of hard work and many hours spent at home days ahead. They say that most of their English teachers never understood that there is a lot of work behind every written text, every home assignment or even the short fragment of a text read aloud in the classroom. Silje says:

“I always do my homework, I rise my hand and stuff, but no one understands how much work lies behind it, how much effort lies behind this 4 as a grade. So, if I get a fine

grade, there is no one who realizes that it is much more work behind it than for the other students to get that grade.”

A similar opinion is expressed by Marete who says that people with dyslexia have to work much harder but not everyone understands it. She says:

“The fact that you get a text that you have to present is not only to stand up and read it for others. You have to read it but you have to learn off by heart every word, you have to understand it in order to be able to talk about this, it is not just to stand and read it.”

Silje when asked about what kind of help she expects from her English teacher replies:

“First of all it is that you have to understand me, understand that I struggle, understand that I use more time, understand that it is much more effort behind when I for example deliver a text that I used so much time on it.”

She continues by talking about one of her English teachers from junior high school who always showed appreciation and understanding of her inputs by giving her some extra points and a bit higher grade. She says that he realized how much she worked at home to get a good grade and the fact that the teacher showed appreciation was motivating for her.

4.3.4 Too little praise and too much critique

The fact that the students do not feel appreciated for their hard work is expressed in their wish for more praise from their teachers. Anne says that her teachers never give her much praise for her work because they do not know how much effort lies behind it. She says:

“I would like to hear it more often. I feel that I should get it but I don’t. When I worked really hard at home in a week and I got the test and then I got a good character and I was happy, I smiled every day but the teacher just said: it’s ok, it’s ok, it was good. If I got a nice comment and praise maybe I would feel more happy for the thing that I have done and maybe I would think that my teacher is happy for me, it would motivate me more, I would try even harder”.

For Peter, hearing a nice word from the teacher is a good feeling because it gives him the satisfaction that despite having dyslexia he is capable of accomplishing his work without help. However, as the rest of the participants, he can usually hear critique and negative comments rather than praise. This has a big influence on self-esteem since, as the students say, after hearing so many negative comments and constantly facing failure, one begins to believe it and get lower expectations about one’s chance for success.

Marete points out the fact that the praise is meaningless if it is not genuine. She mentions one of her teachers who always repeated that she does not need any extra help since she is good in English and will always manage to pass the test. When she failed the test she got very irritated with the teacher. She knew that she is not good enough to manage on her own therefore the teacher's positive comments did not have any bigger meaning for her. She adds to that by saying that a good English teacher will give a genuine praise but what is most important, will make it possible for the student to deserve this praise by adjusting the level to individual needs. She says:

“To give me the tasks that my classmates can manage and which I will never manage is the cause that I will never get praised. So I think also that you have to praise people for the effort even if they are not succeeding but also help them to succeed by giving them something that they will manage.”

Some of the students experience hearing critique in front of the whole class, which may influence the opinions of the other students, as some of the interviewees said. The negative comments about their work or their skills in general affect students' self-esteem, motivation, result in anxiety before coming to the classroom and add to emotional feelings of sadness and disappointment. This is how some of the participants reflected on it:

“I don't remember I got much praise in English. Maybe just a comment: “good” when I was reading. But it happens often that when I read the text and the teacher comments on every single word that is wrong. So he just stops me all the time and I have to repeat after him. That affects my self-esteem and feeling of mastery” (Silje).

“I cried when I got home after my teacher told me these bad things. I would just be angry and sad and I went to her and told her that it is wrong to be angry at people who need more time and help. I think the teacher should help the people who need it. She just said: you don't need more help, you are fine, this is how I teach. She also said that I read bad in comparison to the others and the rest of the class would hear it” (Anne).

“I still keep one of these evaluations you get from the primary school teacher. And it says: Terje doesn't put his best effort in class. It kind of hurts when they say it” (Terje).

In some cases, the teachers critique is very direct and harsh. Some of the teachers express their anger and frustration with the student who needs extra help. Oda says that in the situations where she needs help from the teacher she often hears: “But it’s easy, just do it, you will manage yourself”. Similar words are often directed to Anne when she asks for help. Her teacher frequently replies that she does not need help and that she can manage on her own. She additionally mentions her English teacher from junior high school who criticized her frequently in front of the others, which seriously impacted on her relations with peers. She says:

“I cried myself to sleep, I wrote songs and poems or drew to hide all the sadness. There were days I didn’t want to go to school, but I had to, days when I dreaded the class some days in advance, days when I simply wanted to die.”

4.3.5 Attitude and expectations

The participants in this study expressed their awareness and sensitivity to the teacher’s attitude towards them. They say it shows up in the way the teachers address them and how they respond to their needs. Some of the interviewees notice the difference between the way the teachers relate to them and to the rest of the students. Oda, for example, who has had the same English teacher for six years, says that the teacher has always thought of her as being a poor student and therefore took extra check on her, at the same time embarrassing her in front of the peers. It bothers her to be the one in the classroom who always hears: “Do you understand it Oda?” or “Oda, do you need help?”

Each of the students expresses the feeling of being stigmatized by many of their English teachers. According to them, a lot of teachers perceive dyslexia either as an excuse for getting extra time on the exams, or as lack of intelligence. In the case of the first group of teachers, according to the interviewees, they seem to set the bar too high and push the students too much since they do not think that dyslexia may cause the difficulties in learning, and it all depends on hard work. Therefore, they happen to imply that the students can succeed if they only try harder. These teachers tend to get easily irritated and impatient over the students’ questions, asking for getting more time or demanding more explanations. The interviewees could often hear from their English teachers: “but it is so simple, just try harder, you can do it you just do not do your best”.

On the contrary, the teachers who feel that an individual with dyslexia is less intelligent than an average student seem to have too low expectations. Both situations are equally demotivating for the interviewees. Terje describes one situation by saying:

“I remember in primary school when we would do certain tasks and I would struggle and my English teacher would say: why didn’t you finish in time? They would go on by saying: why don’t you concentrate? But I do concentrate, it is just too much work and it is too hard for me. And they would go...they wouldn’t say the word “lazy” but that is what they were implying, essentially that’s what they said”.

Terje says that most of his English teachers approached him with rather negative attitude before they got to know him and therefore their expectations were understated. He does not interpret it personally and realizes that it is the result of the label of dyslexia. Therefore he is able to tolerate the situation as long as the teacher is open-minded and capable of changing the attitude after getting to know him and his potential.

Quite different is the way Anne understands teacher’s negative attitude towards her. She takes it more personally and says that the way the teacher refers to her and comments on her work shows that they do not like her as a person as think of her as being stupid. She says:

“I understand that my teacher didn’t like me for who I am. Because since I’m not that good at English they don’t think I can be someone, do something, I’m just stupid to them”.

Moreover, Anne says that the negative attitude from the teacher affects the attitude of the classmates and as a result she experienced bullying at previous schools that she attended. She says that she experienced hearing many negative words from the teacher and peers and situations where she was being laughed at. However, her situation has changed and at the current school she met an English teacher who understands her and has positive attitude towards her. It has changed Anne’s attitude towards the subject and it has become one of her favourite school subjects now.

It is worth to mention, that according to the participants, teacher’s attitude towards them does not change after the diagnosis. Before the diagnosis they often felt that the teachers treated them as lazy, not very smart and not doing enough effort to succeed. After the diagnosis most of the English teachers that the participants have met, seemed to still keep the negative attitude which the students blame on the lack of knowledge about dyslexia and following the stereotype. The students, who after the diagnosis finally find the explanation for their difficulties, hope that their situation will change and that they will receive the help and

support they need. However, very often they faced disappointment and their experience is that from the point of diagnosis the real “fight” begins, a fight for getting the help which they have right to and which their teachers seem not to be concerned about.

4.3.6 Feedback and instruction

“Assessment and feedback are rooted in law and curriculum, and is part of the training. Assessment of student competence is an effective tool to increase motivation, a sense of mastery and to promote further learning.” St. Meld. 21(2010-2011).

Each of the participants emphasizes the importance of the feedback and perceives it as one of the missing elements in the pedagogical practices of their English teachers. The students feel that they should receive more information about their progress, the objectives, and the way they could improve. The students wish to get a feedback which would be a guide to improvement of their work. However, what they experience instead is that their teachers provide them with the information that they already know themselves. For example, Silje, who talks a lot about the importance of feedback, says that her teacher writes on the test that she makes a lot of grammatical mistakes, which is something that she knows herself. What she expects is to get some specific tips on how to improve it and what kind of methods she could use to succeed next time.

Some of the participants, like Terje or Silje, received some tips from the specialists, like Dyslexia Norway organization or private teachers, who taught them possible methods for improvement of writing and reading but none of the participants, except from Terje, remembers to get any useful feedback and tips from their English teachers at school. Terje’s teacher always gives him a good feedback after the test by specifically saying what he can do in order to improve his grade, what to work on for the next time. He is very detailed in evaluation, points out the specific problems and sets small goals for Terje, which for him is a great tool for improvement.

Marete talks about one of her English teachers who in reading situations used to say:

“Read it! But I can’t and then he says again: Read it! Just read it! I could get 1 hour more and it wouldn’t help because I don’t know this word and I don’t know how to read it. A good teacher would say: ok you don’t understand so let’s try to do it this and this way.”

Silje's experience from one school is that her English teacher expected from her to come up with suggestions about how to help her to improve her English. They used to have meetings which she attended with her mother and which made her cry each time as she knew that the teacher would start asking her what kind of help she needed. She did not know the answer and felt helpless as she expected that this was the role of the teacher and not her responsibility.

4.3.7 Lesson organization

The variety of methods of teaching English to students with dyslexia has been proven to bring positive results and one of the most effective methods is reported to be the multisensory teaching (Crombie, 2000).

The participants of this study describe their English classes as being usually boring and tiring. One of the most frequently given reasons is the lack of the practical elements and diversity in the classroom. The students experience their lessons having the form of a lecture with the teacher speaking most of the time or asking them to read a piece of text which is usually followed by a writing task. They do not feel enthusiastic about this form of lessons and feel there is too little engagement on the side of the learner. The participants prefer the lessons with the elements of drama, working with the film or a song instead of listening to their teacher's explanations. Anne, when asked about what she likes to do during the English class, replies:

“When we do something, not just sit still. I like when we maybe have to read some short text and then make a theatre performance, or sing, watch a video or just do something instead of sitting still.”

A similar opinion is expressed by Oda who says:

“I need to do things more practical instead of sitting there all the time and listening to the teacher or writing something. I am usually very bored and tired. She could do some group activities or some role play.”

The participants complain also about the old-fashioned methods and materials used by their English teachers, who still focus too much on the course book based teaching. The students say that it is mostly common among the teachers with long working experience who do not agree to make adaptations and often get irritated about hearing the comments and suggestion

from their students about the possible variation of the classes. This is how Terje remembers one of his English teachers:

“He didn’t have any presentations and would just say: read page 10 and 11 and just sit there and do nothing while we are reading. But then we don’t need him at all cause we could do the same at home, it was like a homework but done at school. When we told him, he would get angry and say: This is the way I’ve been doing it for the last 40 years!”

The students say that one of the most boring parts of the lessons is grammar or rather the way it is presented. English grammar per se is not the most difficult part of English learning but it is still one of the most disliked elements of classroom work because it is usually taught by learning the rules and doing drilling exercises.

The participants express their wish for more elements of up-to-date and interesting information, which could be used in the English teaching. This relates not only to grammar teaching but also to all the other elements of English lessons. Terje gives the example of one of his English teachers who always tried to make the lessons more interesting by using a lot of authentic materials like BBC videos, newspaper articles or radio auditions, instead of basing the lessons only the course book.

The participants often mention the lack of variety in English teacher’s practice. Terje, for example, says:

“Some teachers have just presentation and then you do all the questions on your own. But other teachers they will do the presentation and then divide us into small groups and we would make a mini presentations instead of the teacher all the time talking. If the teacher varies the methods all the time I reckon everyone would be more enthusiastic and interested in the subject. So a bit of listening, a bit of discussion is very important.”

The participants mention also a group work to be helpful classroom experience. They like to do some mini projects in groups, have discussions which give them wider perspective on the particular subject without the necessity of reading about it on their own, as the responsibility for each part is divided between individual students.

Moreover, the classroom instruction is reported by four of the participant as one of the challenges in the classroom. They find it difficult to understand what the teacher expects them to do. They like when the teacher explains step by step and then gives the short explanation in

Norwegian to make sure that they understood what they were asked to do. Peter expressed his frustration about misunderstanding the teacher's instructions:

“The worst is simply to misunderstand what he actually means. And then when you have done quite a lot he says that you have to do it again because you have done it completely wrong because you misunderstood what it was about and this is the worst for me”.

English lessons are undeniably a big struggle for the participants and the most commonly mentioned reasons are the lack of necessary time for finishing activities, lack of adaptations and boring and not diversified lessons. The students mention variety as a very important element to make the English class more interesting and beneficial.

4.3.8 Teacher's personality

Last but not least, it is the teacher's personality that seems to be another affective factor in students learning experience. Certain personal characteristics of the teacher can work as an additional motivating factor for learning.

One of the most important characteristics, which was already mentioned in the point 4.3.1 and therefore will not be broadly described here, is understanding. An understanding teacher will make proper pedagogical decisions and facilitate learning achievement among the students with dyslexia.

Moreover, the students appreciated the English teachers, who show enthusiasm, motivation to teaching and sense of humour. For some of the interviewees, personal characteristics are a part of good pedagogy and only a combination of good personality with effective teaching practice makes a perfect teacher that all the students wish for. Peter and Anne, who were often criticized by their teachers when they needed extra help, add patience as a very important character trait. They feel that the teacher needs to be patient instead of getting annoyed when they need more help and ask for extra explanation.

The participants explain that the teacher who is enthusiastic about the subject and shows that they enjoy what they are doing will spread this joy to the whole class and make it easier for the students who do not like English to become more positive and motivated to learning the subject. Even though they may find the subject challenging, it may be more pleasant experience to come to the classroom if they know that there is a teacher waiting for them with a smile upon his or her face.

5 The discussion of the research findings

The goal of the present study was to highlight the issue of how Norwegian students with dyslexia experience learning English as a foreign language. The main findings will be presented below from the etic perspective applied in the interpretation of the results and setting them in the context of previous findings of relevant studies. The findings will be presented in relation to the three main themes of the study formulated as sub-questions.

5.1 What kind of difficulties do students face in learning English?

The first question posed in this study was focused on the particular areas of the language learning which the students find challenging.

In face of the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis of Sparks and Ganschow (1991), which says that problems in native language will translate to similar challenges in foreign language learning, it is not unexpected that the students in the present study express facing difficulties in learning English. The responses of the participants confirmed the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis by reporting many challenges that they struggle with in their learning process.

Moreover, the accounts of the interviewees confirm the dimensional nature of dyslexia as reflected in the variety in severity and character of its manifestations among the individuals (Fletcher, 2009). While there is certain diversity of difficulties expressed by the participants, reading and writing are evidently the most frequently mentioned. They were also mentioned as the most typical symptoms of dyslexia in the results of the previous studies on phonological difficulties (Nijakowska, 2010)

The common reason for describing English as a very difficult language given by the participants relates to the orthography of the language. This supports the previous arguments that the orthography of the English language is the biggest challenge observed in Norwegian students (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). The most frequent explanation given by the participants is the lack of predictability in grapheme and phoneme correspondence which is in line with the view of the grain size theory, which says that the degree of reading difficulties will vary

across different languages and their orthographic depth (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006). The English language was characterized by opaque orthographic system as opposed to Norwegian that on the scale 1-5 (1- deep orthography, 5- shallow orthography) received the score of 3, which makes it a semi-transparent language (Hagtvet, Helland & Lyster, 2006). It explains the fact that the process of word encoding results in numerous misspellings, as the students write the words the way they hear them. It is in agreement with the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis, which explains it as one of the results of poor phonological processing (Nijakowska, 2010).

Moreover, the participants repeatedly mention their difficulties with correct and fluent reading. They describe it as a highly demanding and time consuming process. Furthermore, the slow and impaired word decoding influences significantly students' reading comprehension. Reading comprehension involves substantial re-reading of the same text three or even four times. This also accords with phonological deficit hypothesis which explains difficulties with word decoding and consequently with comprehension as the lack of phonological awareness (Stanovich, 1998; Vellutino, 1979, as cited in Kormos & Smith, 2012). The participants say they don't perceive the words as whole units but rather have to put the letters together and make sense out of them to understand the word, pronounce it correctly and understand its meaning. This makes it a three step process which reveals the lack of automaticity and fluency in reading (Everat & Reid, 2009). This is mentioned in the theory of dyslexia as one of the most common behavioural manifestations of the phenomenon and explained in phonological deficit hypothesis as well (Nijakowska, 2010).

The problems reported by the students concerning the difficulty with word decoding were explained by impairment of the phonological processing (implicit phonology) where an individual cannot use speech without reflecting on the structure of the words (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). The students do not see the connection between the speech sound and its representation, which explains why often the written word makes sense only after somebody else reads it for them. This sound-symbol relation awareness was also explained by Sparks and Ganschow (1991) as being the result of problems with learning phonics and having the biggest impact on foreign language learning difficulties.

These reading problems are additionally enhanced by the visual problems, as expressed by two of the participants. They perceive the text to blur and the letters to switch places or

disappear. The visual problems have been documented as one of the manifestations of dyslexia in previous studies (Riddick, 1996).

Among the other manifestations of problems explained in the phonological deficit hypothesis, the students reflect on their problems with internalizing the information, for example when learning new words for the test, as well as with keeping the information in short time memory, for example during the copying from the blackboard. Problems with memorizing the information have been described in the previous studies on dyslexia as one of the frequently observed manifestations among the students (Miles, 1992; Snowling, 2000).

These findings do not confirm the results of the previously mentioned study by Swedish researchers (Muller-Guron & Lundberg, 2000) where the idea of “dyslexic preference for English reading” was suggested. Despite the fact that Norwegian language gets the same score (3) as Swedish on the scale from 1 to 5 regarding their orthographic transparency, the students in this study did not describe reading in English as easier than in their native language.

Finally the students do not express any serious problems with listening and oral elements of learning, which were reported in previous evidence on phonological processing difficulties and working memory deficiencies (Snowling, 1995). A possible explanation may be the exposure of Norwegian students to television as well as travelling abroad and opportunities to use language in more authentic situations.

5.2 What emotional factors accompany the students' learning process?

The students' responses confirm the existence of emotional factors involved in their learning process of the English language. The difficulties described by the participants are accompanied by lowered motivation, poor self-esteem and anxiety. These have been recognized as some of the typical emotional responses to learning difficulties among students with learning disabilities (Stampoltzis & Plychronopoulou, 2009; Riddick, 1995; Hellendoorn & Ruijsenaars, 2000). They were also among the primary factors affecting learning achievement as suggested by Krashen in his Affective Filter Hypothesis (1987).

Moreover, the dominant feelings concerning the experiences of learning English are frustration, the feeling of being different, lonely, and stigmatized. These findings fit well with the accounts by students in Stacey Blackman's study (2009) who expressed similar feelings in response to their school difficulties and failure.

The participants in the current study distinguish three specific types of situations which bring the primary contribution to increasing these emotional reactions.

The first one relates to the judgment from peers and the teachers, which they face in the situations when their difficulties become evident to the others. This results in increased anxiety, lowered self-esteem, withdrawal and attempts to avoid the situations where their problems can be exposed, like during the reading out loud in the classroom. In the theory of language learning anxiety and self-esteem, the fear of social judgment and need of acceptance were described among the crucial factors increasing learning anxiety and lowering self-esteem (Riddick, 1996; Du, 2009). The fear of social assessment was also expressed by the participants of the study by Blackman (2009) and Riddick (2000). Similarly to Riddick's findings, the students' fear of stigmatization was caused not only by the label of dyslexia but also by the visible manifestations of the disability.

This result may indicate that the classroom atmosphere is perceived as lacking support and acceptance for the individual differences. It may explain why the participants in the study feared making mistakes, or using helping tools. As one of the interviewees explains it, the moment when he had to use special glasses in the classroom was the first time everyone could see that he had a problem. The importance of creating non-threatening atmosphere for students with dyslexia has been highlighted in previous studies (Dörnyei & Csize, 1998).

Another central theme that emerged from the interviews was the comparisons the interviewees make by relating their performance to the achievement and level of mastery represented by their peers. The typical reactions are usually lowered self-esteem, lack of motivation, frustration and sadness. This corroborates the findings of Riddick (1996) who says that one of the typical factors among students with dyslexia which affects negatively their self-esteem is comparing their achievement to their peers.

The students feel they always lag behind their classmates and that every task demands from them more time than average students need. This is in line with the results presented by

Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi (2009) where students with dyslexia expressed similar feeling of being left behind in the classroom activities and therefore developed low self-esteem.

Finally, the third theme refers to amount of work the students invest into learning which does not often bring the results. The students do not experience mastery of the subject and do not feel their effort is acknowledged and appreciated by the teacher. These situations are described by the participants as some of the most demotivating factors in their learning process as well as those that pose a threat to their self-esteem. It can be explained by the fact that the students need the feeling of competence in order to develop positive picture of themselves (Kormos & Smith, 2012).

The students in the present study all realize that dyslexia causes their learning barriers, which craves more work and efforts than it is usually expressed by their peers. However, as long as their work yields results, their effort is appreciated in the form of good grade or praise, the students feel more competence and motivation to trying harder for the next time. Based on what the literature (Riddick, 1996) says about self-esteem, it can be concluded that students who experience feeling of competence may improve their self-esteem. Better self-esteem in turn, may positively affect their belief that they can succeed if they invest necessary effort into studying. It may also imply that the motivation is dynamic and can change by being influenced by other external factors (Csizér et al., 2010).

All in all, the diagnosis of dyslexia and the difficulties it causes, evoke some emotional reactions like feeling less intelligent or different. However, the present study shows that these feelings do not result directly and automatically from getting the diagnosis of dyslexia or facing the difficulties in learning.

5.3 How do the pedagogical decisions of the English teachers affect the students and their learning experiences?

The interpretation of the students' perceptions of their teachers' pedagogy will be reflected on below and have been presented in the models (Attachment 9, Attachment 10).

The findings relating to this question suggest that from the participants' perspective, their English teachers often create additional difficulties in learning rather than helping them to

overcome those that they face because of dyslexia. It is in line with the findings of the study by Stacey Blackman (2009) whose participants experienced learning in a similar way.

The perception of the students in this study is that the teachers approach their difficulties in learning English either as differences or as barriers. In the first case, the teachers will try to adapt the teaching so that these differences will not impede learning to such a degree that the achievement would not be possible at all. They will rather find the individual strengths of the students and create the environment for developing these strengths and contributing to the learning achievement. The example is given by Terje, whose teacher allowed him to compensate for his poor writing skills by using his strong oral skills. In this way the teacher shows recognition, understanding and acceptance for Terje's difference in learning. It gives him the experience of competence and mastery of the situation which rises motivation and belief in his ability to succeed (Bandura, 1981; as cited in Skaalvik, 1994). It has been described as a very important element of good pedagogy to facilitate the achievement of each individual despite their possible learning difficulties (Nijakowska, 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

The students in the current study express their clear expectations and awareness of the role of their English teachers in their learning achievement, shaping their emotional responses, general attitude and experiences of learning process. It is in agreement with a number of previous studies (Nicholls & Thorkildsen, 1989, as cited in Klinger and Vaughn, 1999; Blackman, 2011; Kormos et al, 2009) which showed students as competent judges of teachers' strategies concerning assessment, classroom adaptations, or feedback.

The first finding shows that the primary element of teacher's pedagogy is the understanding. It has been seen throughout the study that understanding is the starting point deciding about the attitudes and pedagogical decisions taken by the teachers. The importance of understanding for students with dyslexia has been previously noted in the study of Nielsen (2011) as a very important element of teacher's pedagogy as seen from the students' point of view.

The participants relate to understanding as an indispensable prerequisite in teaching practice. The teacher does not have to be an expert of dyslexia but understand it as a learning disability, not an excuse for being lazy. An understanding teacher will therefore recognize and show tolerance for individual differences in learning that dyslexia may cause, and will express

positive attitude and care towards the child. The students feel that the teacher who does not have any knowledge about dyslexia, relies on the widely accepted beliefs that dyslexia equals either low intelligence or laziness. This in turn, will affect the teacher's expectations towards the students by either setting the bar too low, or expecting too much and implying that the students do not put effort into their work. They students in the study often experience that their teachers imply that their failure stems from the lack of effort. This is in agreement with several previous studies where students with dyslexia experienced frequently being stigmatized and called lazy by their teachers and in some cases they eventually believed that the reason for their failures was laziness (Kormos et al, 2010, Stampoltzis & Polychronopoulou, 2009; Gibson & Kendall, 2010; Hellendoorn & Ruijsenaar, 2000).

Furthermore, the positive attitude of the teacher is expressed by kindness, enabling success, praising and appreciating the efforts and the work that lies behind every accomplishment. These are all highly valued elements of the teacher's pedagogy among the students in this study. They are also underlined in the ten commandments of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998).

Moreover, the understanding of dyslexia will further be reflected in the adaptations concerning the teaching materials, assessment criteria, provision of extra time during the classroom activities and homework tailored to the individual abilities. The students expect from their English teachers to organize lessons in the success-oriented way where every person has a chance to feel some degree of mastery of the subject. This finding is contradictory to some previous studies which were synthesized by Klinger and Vaughn (1999), where students expressed negative attitudes towards adapted materials, and grades based on the tasks or tests which were tailored to their needs. The students felt it was not only unfair to their peers but also at times humiliating to them. Opposite attitude is expressed by the participants in the current study, who feel that every little success is meaningful. It may be explained by the fact that the students, even though they get adapted tasks, they need to feel the appropriate level of challenge in these tasks. As stated by Marete, she feels satisfaction in succeeding on the task adapted to her individual needs, since despite being perceived as easy by the other students, it is challenging for her.

The adaptations applied by the teachers are seen by the students as a signal of understanding and positive attitude to the student and individual differences. The teacher with understanding and positive attitude will set the expectations on the appropriate level by keeping it challenging but attainable at the same time. It is one of the points in the ten commandments

for increasing the learning motivation of the students (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). It is also in line with the experienced of the students in Kormos et al. study (2009).

All these abovementioned factors such as understanding, attitude or adaptations, when put together increase the student's chance for achievement despite the differences in learning. This in turn, will diminish the negative emotional responses by serving as a motivational boost, increasing self-esteem, diminishing the anxiety and finally shifting the attitude to learning and to the teacher to more positive. Finally lowered affective filter will facilitate further achievement (Krashen, 1985)

Like in the study by Csizér et al. (2010), the teacher's negative attitude, lack of adaptations, and lack of understanding shape negative attitude of the student towards learning English. Students need to see the reasons for putting their best efforts and therefore they have to see the results, progress and their input being appreciated. Praise, provided it is genuine, is the way of expressing the appreciation and a missing element of teacher's pedagogy frequently mentioned in the interviews. It corroborates with the study by Riddick (1996), where students perceived praise as a characteristic of a good teacher. A possible explanation is the individual need of feeling accepted, competent and worthy in order to shape a positive picture of oneself as a student (Riddick, 1996). A positive opinion about oneself as a competent student will in turn lead to increased motivation (ibid).

The motivation is described by the students as dynamic variable deciding about the amount and persistence of the efforts they invest into learning. The level of their motivation shifts accordingly to the level of success and achievement. The dynamic nature of the motivation has been described by Csizér et al. (2010) who argued that it changes by the influence of the external factors. In this study the most frequently described factor affecting motivation is the already mentioned feeling of mastery and achievement. It empowers the students as they believe that the success is possible if only they invest their best efforts.

And consequently, failure is the main reason for decreased motivation. It confirms what Kormos and Smith (2012) said about the effect of failure as contributing to impaired motivation, higher anxiety, and lower self-esteem. The students indeed express their self-esteem to be affected by the failures they experience. The ongoing failure is received by the students as a message that they are not able to achieve their goal despite their greatest efforts. In some students it results in withdrawal and staying silent and taking a role of an observer

rather than a participant in the classroom. This was described by Riddick (1996) as one of the common responses to failure and affected self-esteem.

What is more, the students mention the importance of feedback as an important element of teacher's pedagogy. However, it should include not only the comments saying what was wrong, but also giving some tips for the improvement and suggestions of methods the students could apply in learning. This was also included in the already mentioned 10 commandments for a teacher (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

One more finding from the study relate to the way the students define a good English teacher. The most common answers, some of which were already mentioned, are: showing understanding and patience, giving clear instructions, adapting teaching, setting appropriate goals. It needs to be emphasized that none of the students related directly to teacher's personality. The descriptions of a good teacher related mostly to teaching adaptations and strategies. However, when asked about the personality, the students say that it makes a good combination to pedagogical skills, and the most important personal characteristic was enthusiasm and sense of humour. The definition of a good English teacher given by the students in this study corroborates the descriptions of a good teacher given in the studies presented by Klingner and Vaughn (1999) where the students reflected on clear feedback and instructions or classroom adaptations as characterizing a good teacher.

Finally, the students related to the organization of the English classes and the responses they give relate mostly to the lack of variety in teaching methods and materials. Moreover, the instructions are often misunderstood if the teachers use just English and do not provide extra explanations in Norwegian. The students lack practical elements in the classroom, and complain that the teachers focus too much on course books as the primary material utilized in the class, which makes learning boring and tiring process. These utterances are close to those given by the participants in the study by Kormos et al. (2009) where students pointed similar teaching methods and strategies in the language classroom.

The positive comments relate to English teachers who use authentic, up to date materials, like English newspapers, radio auditions or films. They also wish for more group work, drama play, activities involving manual work, movement and creativity. The accounts of the students concerning the teaching strategies and lesson organization correlate with the rules recommended in multisensory teaching methods, which underline the importance of including

variety and involving all the senses in teaching foreign language to students with dyslexia (Crombie, 2000).

6 Conclusion and implications

In the following part, the most important findings which helped to answer the research questions will be summed up. Furthermore, the limitations of the current study and implications for further investigation will be presented.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

The study investigated the experiences of Norwegian students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language. The data revealed that the experiences of the students are in general negative. The English language is recognized by the participants as especially challenging among the other school subject. Because of dyslexia, the students feel to be in substantially disadvantaged position in learning English and a lot of difficulties they describe stem from the nature of the disability. The most typical problems relate to reading fluency and comprehension, or correct spelling.

However, one of the central findings in the present study is that difficulties per se have just a partial role in shaping students' experiences. Even though the students justify their difficulties by the nature of dyslexia, their failure is usually blamed on the teachers and particularly their inappropriate pedagogical decisions.

It is further suggested that English teachers and their pedagogical practices in response to the difficulties revealed by the students, play central role in students' learning experiences by facilitating or impeding their achievement, shaping their attitude towards learning the language, impacting on their motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety.

The interview data shows that affective variables like motivation, attitude, anxiety and self-esteem are in continuous change and interaction with the students' experiences of their current learning situation which depend strongly on the teacher. Therefore, the study implies that the English teachers have the power to make a substantial change in the students' attitudes towards learning a foreign language, and despite the possible difficulties caused by dyslexia their experiences may be positively transformed by their teachers.

6.2 Implications of the study

The results of the present study imply that there may be a need for raising awareness about dyslexia and necessary adaptations in teaching practice among the English teachers, which could be done by including the component of special educational needs in teaching preparation courses.

However, the limitation resulting from the nature of qualitative study and the small sample size requires caution in generalizing the results of this study to the entire population of the students with dyslexia across Norway. This may suggest a possibility for a further study of wider scope with the use of quantitative approach. Nevertheless, the applicability of this study and its conclusions will be left for the reader who can possibly transfer the experiences of the students in this study to their own situation.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that it presents a subjective knowledge seen from the perspective of the students. It is just one side of the story which could be possible to investigate in further research by doing a comparative investigation of students' and teachers' perceptions of the classroom situations. It is possible that these two groups could see the same situations in two completely different ways.

However, the study can serve as a feedback for the English teachers in understanding how their pedagogical decisions may be interpreted by students with dyslexia, and how significant meaning these decisions and general treatment in the classroom have for the students. Communication between the teachers and student should be the key to improving the quality of learning experiences among the students. The accounts of the students in this study show that they are skilled judges of their teacher's pedagogy, which implies that their opinions should be taken into account by the teachers. The students do not mention any concrete teaching methods as such, but are able to reflect on and come up with many examples concerning the class organization, types of activities, methods of assessment, instruction or feedback.

The last limitation of this study that needs to be pointed out is the fact that the affective factors mentioned in the study are on their own complex and supported by broad theoretical background. Therefore, there may have been some additional variables which could have impacted on the students' answers relating to their motivation, self-esteem, anxiety or attitudes and therefore affecting the whole learning experiences. Consequently, a possible

implication for the further research could be to include a wider context of factors, such as parental support or the time of diagnosis.

All in all, there is still a need for more research on the voice of students with dyslexia learning foreign languages. In response to the widely acknowledged challenges the students with dyslexia may face in their learning process it is crucial to determine what kind of help can be provided by the teachers in order to improve their learning situation. It concerns the concrete teaching methods, but also the general well-being of the students. However, in order to apply any changes in the teaching practice, one needs to hear what the students themselves perceive as being best for them and use it as a feedback and a guideline for further work.

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Appendix 1: Permission letter

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
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Tamara Tabakhmelashvili
Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1140 Blindern
0318 OSLO

Vår dato: 25.07.2012

Vår ref: 30983 / 3 / MAS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 02.07.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

30983	<i>The Experiences of Norwegian Students with Syslexia learning English as a Foreign Language</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Tamara Tabakhmelashvili
Student	Magdalena Szaszkievicz

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

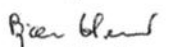
Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2013, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen


Bjørn Henriksen


Mads Solberg

Kontaktperson: Mads Solberg tlf: 55 58 89 28

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Magdalena Szaszkievicz, Haakon Tvetersvei 86, 0686 OSLO

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices

OSLO NSD Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo Tel: +47 22 85 52 11 nd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM NSD Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim Tel: +47 73 59 19 07 kyre.warvolfset@ntnu.no

TRONHØI NSD SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø Tel: +47 77 64 43 36 nsdmso@svf.uib.no

Appendix 2: Letter to the school principal (Norwegian)

Til rektor ved xxx skole om student prosjekt

Undersøkelse i forbindelse med masteroppgave

Jeg er en internasjonal masterstudent i avdelingen for spesialpedagogikk på Universiteten i Oslo, og jeg jobber med min masteroppgave. Tittelen for oppgaven vil være: «Erfaringene fra norske studenter med dysleksi som lærer engelsk som fremmedspråk»

Målet er å få en dypere innsikt og forståelse for hvordan studenter med dysleksi erfarer det å lære engelsk på skolen og hvordan lærerens pedagogiske tilnærming påvirker elevene og deres læringsprosess.

For oppgaven trenger jeg tre elever fra din skole som har dysleksi og har fått diagnosen fra PPT. Spørsmålene vil dreie seg om elevens erfaring med engelskundervisning og utfordringene de møter i forbindelse med dysleksi. Spørsmålene vil også dreie seg om lærerens pedagogiske tilnærming og hvordan det påvirker eleven og deres læringsprosess. Underveis i intervjuet kan eleven velge å prate norsk.

Jeg vil bruke opptaker og ta notater mens jeg prater med elevene. Intervjuet vil ta opptil 60 minutter og jeg vil avtale tid og sted med elevene. Det er frivillig for eleven å delta, og de har mulighet til å trekke seg når som helst uten videre forklaring. Hvis de trekker seg vil all innsamlet data slettet. I oppgaven vil all data bli anonymisert og behandlet konfidensielt. All informasjon blir slettet når oppgaven er levert i juni 2013. Prosjektet har blitt godkjent av Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste. Om du har lyst til å delta i undersøkelsen, vennligst lever vedlagt informasjonsbrev og brev om samtykke til elever med dysleksi på din skole.

Ta gjerne kontakt med meg på mail: m.szaskiewicz88@gmail.com eller telefon: 46346616.

Du kan også ta kontakt med veilederen min Tamar Tabakhmelashvili på mail:
tamar.tabakhmelashvili@isp.uio.no.

Vennlig hilsen

Magdalena Szaskiewicz

Appendix 3: Letter to the school principal (English)

To the principal of the xxx school

Information letter and request to participate in the study

I am an international master student at the department of Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo and I am working on my final thesis. The title of the thesis will be: “The experiences of Norwegian students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language”.

The aim is to get a deeper insight and understanding of how students with dyslexia experience learning English at school and how teacher’s pedagogy influence the students and their learning process. To pursue this knowledge I would like to interview three students at your school who have special educational needs because of dyslexia and got the diagnosis from PPT. The interview questions will deal with students' experiences of learning English with regard to the problems they face because of dyslexia. The questions will also concentrate on the teacher’s pedagogy and how it influences students and their learning experience. During the interviews the students can choose to use the Norwegian language.

I will use the tape recorder and take notes while I am talking to students. The interviews will take up to 60 minutes and we will agree on the time and place with students. It is voluntary for students to participate in the study and they have the opportunity to withdraw at any time without giving any further justification. If they withdraw, all collected data will be deleted. Collected data in the project will be anonymised and any information will be treated confidentially. The information will be deleted when the task is delivered in June 2013. This project has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

If you are eager to participate in this study please deliver the enclosed information letter and consent form to students with dyslexia in your school.

Please, contact me on email: m.szaszkiewicz88@gmail.com or telephone: 46346616.

You can also contact my supervisor M. Sc. Tamar Tabakhmalashvili on email:
tamar.tabakhmelashvili@isp.uio.no.

Best regards,

Magdalena Szaszkiewicz

Appendix 4: Letter to students (Norwegian)

Forespørsel om deltagelse i studie for mastergrad på Universitetet i Oslo

Kjære elev,

Som masterstudent ved Universitetet i Oslo har jeg begynt på min masteroppgave, hvor tittelen er: "The experience of Norwegian students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language". Min veileder er Tamar Tabakhmalashvili. Som tittelen tilsier ønsker jeg å finne ut hvordan erfaring elever med dysleksi har når de lærer engelsk som fremmedspråk. Mer detaljert skal jeg spørre dere om vanskeligheter ved å lære engelsk som er forårsaket av dysleksi, og hvordan disse vanskelighetene påvirker deg og din motivasjon til å lære.

Dette brevet er sendt til skolens administrasjon, jeg vet dermed ikke hvem du er før du signerer brevet. Jeg har spurt læreren på din skole om å sende dette brevet til elever som har dysleksi.

Om du ønsker å delta og dele dine tanker, ønsker jeg å foreta intervjuer med deg på skolen i skoletiden eller etter, alt ettersom hva som passer for deg.

Skolen og Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste har godkjent å foreta studien. Jeg håper du vil delta fordi din mening og informasjon er viktig og kan være nyttig for deg og andre.

Jeg vil også nevne at det er frivillig å delta og at du kan trekke deg fra studien på hvilket som helst tidspunkt uten å oppgi grunn. Du skal også vite at i masteroppgaven vil alt være anonymt. Jeg skal besøke flere skoler, og de som leser masteroppgaven vil ikke kunne kjenne igjen hvem jeg pratet med eller hvilken skole jeg besøkte. Jeg har også taushetsplikt om informasjonen jeg får. Når masteroppgaven er ferdig, som vil være 30.08.2013, vil opptakene fra intervjuene bli slettet.

Hvis du eller dine foreldre har noen spørsmål, kontakt meg gjerne:

Telefon: 46346616

E-post: m.szaszkiewicz88@gmail.com

Ønsker du å delta, ønsker jeg at du gir meg beskjed på mail eller sms og at du signere under.

Vennlig hilsen

Magdalena Szaszkiewicz

Appendix 5: Information letter to students (English)

Dear student,

As a student at the University of Oslo, I started on my thesis, which is titled: "The experience of Norwegian students with dyslexia learning English as a foreign language". My supervisor is Tamar Tabakhmelashvili. As the title suggests, I want to find out how the pupils with dyslexia experience learning English as a foreign language. More detailed I will ask you about difficulties in learning English which are caused by dyslexia, and the way the difficulties affect you.

This letter is sent to the school administration, I do not know who you are before you sign the letter. I asked the teacher at your school to send this letter to pupils with dyslexia. If you want to participate and share your thoughts, I would like to interview you at school during school hours or after, whatever suits you.

The school and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services approved to conduct the study. I hope you will join because your opinion and information are important and can be helpful to you and to the other students with dyslexia.

I would also like to mention that it is voluntary to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. You should also know that the thesis will all be anonymous. I will be visiting several schools, and those who read the thesis will not be able to recognize who I talked to or what school I visited. I am obliged to confidentiality of the information I get. When the thesis is completed, which will be 30.06.2013, the recordings from the interviews will be deleted.

If you or your parents have any questions, feel free to contact me:

Telefon: 46346616 or e-mail: m.szaskiewicz88@gmail.com

If you want to participate in the study, I would like you to let me know by mail or sms and sign the consent letter below.

Regards

Magdalena Szaszkiewicz

Appendix 6: Consent letter (Norwegian)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om undersøkelsen og stiller meg positivt til å delta i studien.

Jeg samtykker til at intervjuet blir tatt opp.

Signatur.....

Telefonnummer.....

Appendix 7: Consent letter (English)

Consent statement

I have received the information about the project and wish to participate in the study.

I agree on the interview to be recorded.

Signature.....

Telephone number.....

Appendix 8: Presentation of the participants

Terje is 17 years old student with high self-expectations and aspiration to become a lawyer. He thinks English is one of the top difficult school subjects because of dyslexia, but also finds positive aspects of having dyslexia. He got diagnosed in the 4th grade which, as he says, was very important in developing the studying structure and techniques from the start. He calls himself lucky since he received help early on after diagnosis. He has learnt many techniques of making his learning more effective and managed to work out some compensation strategies. The advice he would give to the other people with dyslexia is: *“Don’t give up even though it is hard at the beginning. It is good to let people know that you are not stupid! That’s not why you get worse grades, not because you are less intelligent but you just have to look at things in another way and you have more than them to struggle with, so you have to work twice as hard, but then, when you get the feeling of succeeding that would turn things around and you will see that you can make a change.”*

Peter is the second grade student who wants to become an electrician and build house installations. He found out about having dyslexia when he was 14, which for him was a relief to finally know what was wrong, why he couldn’t learn like all the others. On the other hand he thinks it was way too late and it is “too late now to make up for all the lost time”. He feels like he never got enough help from the teachers to make the learning progress easier for him. Peter doesn’t feel like he can achieve as much as the other students without dyslexia and that dyslexia will always keep him behind. He doesn’t have motivation to work a lot on his own at home. He doesn’t ask his parents for help with making sure that he receives necessary adjustments in the classroom.

Anne is a 16 year old girl who describes herself as a cheerful and kind person who may seem to be shy to people who don’t know her. She is writing a blog which helps her to describe her feelings about school and about having dyslexia. She writes poems and does karate which helps her to relieve all the anger and frustration. She has predominantly negative experiences about her schools and most of the English teachers that she has met. She hasn’t got a diagnosis before she was 15, which she says was very late as she always knew that there was

something that caused her learning problems. She experienced mobbing at school not only from the peers but also from the teachers. Despite that, she wants to make best out of her experiences and help people in similar situations in the future.

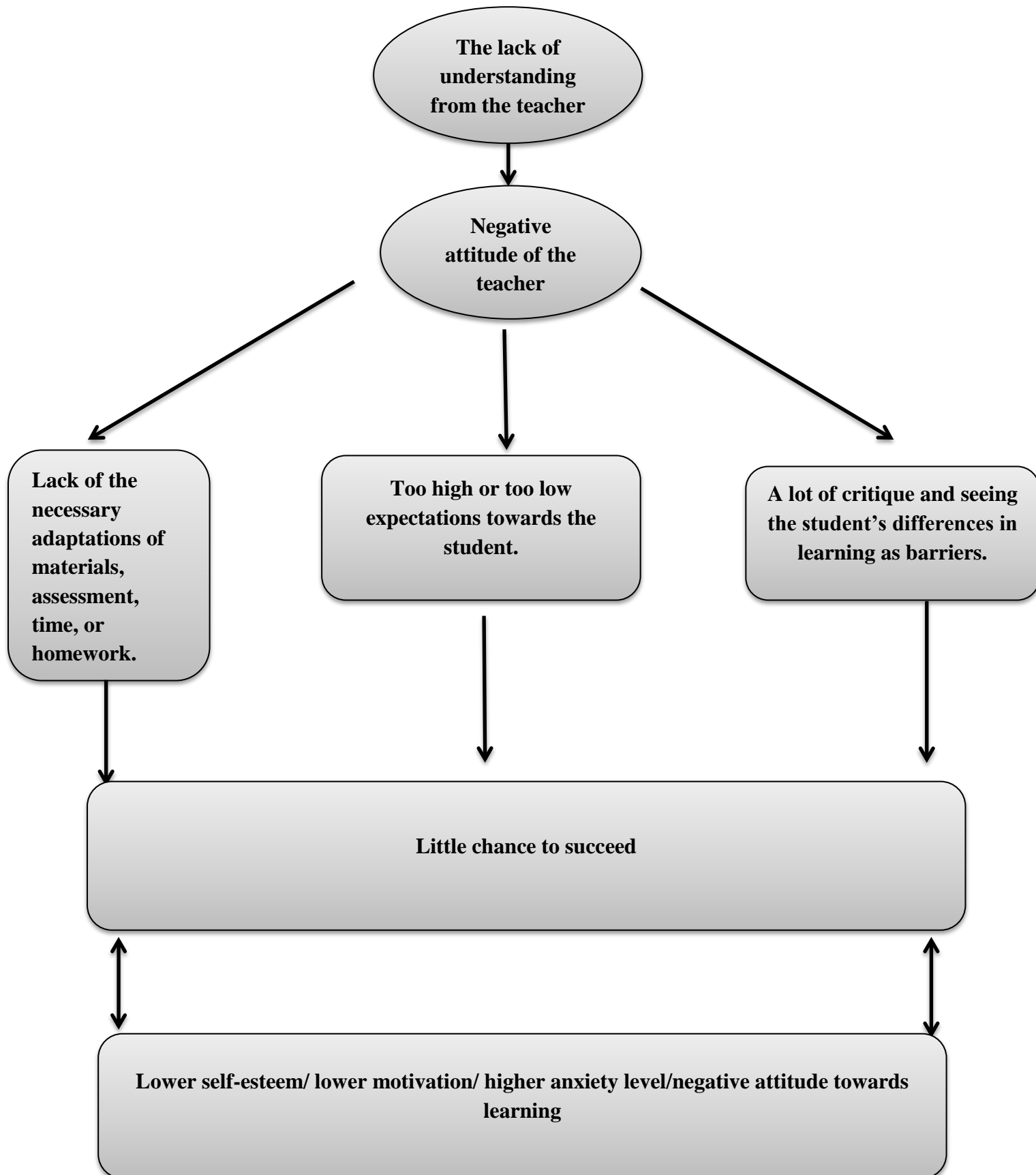
Oda is a 16 year old student who dreams of being a dog therapist. She says she has great contact with animals and that she loves animals because they don't judge her, like people do. The time she got diagnosis was in the 6th grade after the final exam in the end of the school year. All the time before the diagnosis she knew there was something wrong that made her perform much worse than the other students at school. The time she found out about dyslexia was a on one hand a relief to finally "have an excuse for not managing". On the other hand, Oda cannot find anything positive about having dyslexia and describes it as a burden. She says she strongly dislikes learning English and finds it the most difficult school subject.

Marete describes herself as an effective and active person. She has rather negative experiences with school but at the same time she is very optimistic and despite the many hurdles at school, she managed to live with dyslexia without letting it be the obstacle in achieving her life dreams and goals. She says that even though it is very hard you can still manage well at school if you find 3 elements in your life: finding your strong points and strengthening them, finding people who support you like parents, friends or teachers; and finally asking for helping aids like audio books, pc and necessary programmes. English is for her the most challenging subject and she says that she has never managed to master it and that lessons are a waste of time for her.

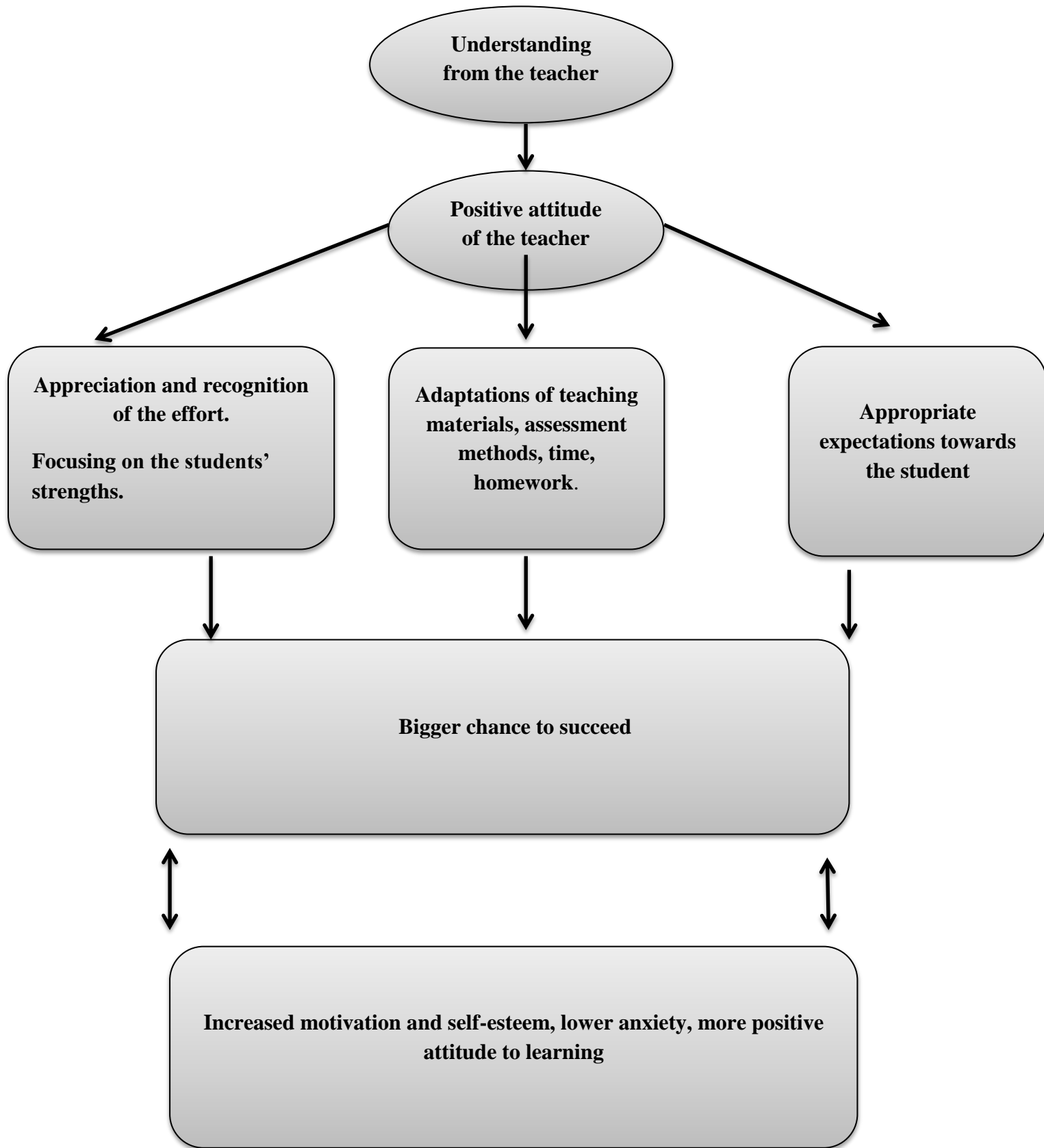
Silje is 17 years old girl who is highly motivated in pursuing her dreams. She used to be very shy and had low self-esteem because of dyslexia and school situations but she managed to work on it and make best out of dyslexia turning it into something positive. She says that without having dyslexia she wouldn't be where she is now, and work in a place where she can help people with learning problems. She found out she has dyslexia when she was in the 4th grade in the primary school and even though it was quite early, the diagnosis hasn't changed a lot since she never received enough help from the teachers. She has always struggled a lot with English and calls it a "sensitive area" to talk about. Silje's experience is the ongoing fight with school to get help and adjustments that she has a legal right to. Her parents had to pay for private teachers in English. Dyslexia turned her life into something positive and as she says: "it took me for a journey through organization work and many exciting things. Many things wouldn't happen in my life if it wasn't for dyslexia so it is actually really ok to have

dyslexia. I learned to live with it and I acknowledged myself that ok I have it but I will try to make best out of it, and I did“.

Appendix 9: Model (a)



Appendix 10: Model (b)



Appendix 11: The interview guide (Norwegian)

Før intervjuet

Intervjueren presenterer seg selv, hovedpoengene med oppgaven og presiserer at det er frivillig å delta, samt at den som blir intervjuet kan trekke seg når som helst uten konsekvenser. Elevene blir spurt om tillatelse til å gjøre opptak under samtalene.

1. Introduksjon

Kan du fortell meg litt om deg selv?

Hva liker du å gjøre på fritiden?

Hvordan vil du beskrive deg selv?

2. Generelt om dysleksi

Når fikk du diagnosen dysleksi, og hvordan opplevde du det?

Hvordan er din forståelse av dysleksi? Hvem forklarte deg dette?

Hva er den mest positive tingen ved å ha dysleksi / og den mest negative?

3. Engelsk språkopplæring

Hva er ditt favorittfag, og det du liker minst?

Synes du det er viktig å lære et fremmedspråk? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?

Hvordan er dine erfaringer ved å lære engelsk på skolen?

Hva er det mest vanskelige ved å lære engelsk på skolen?

Hvilke vanskeligheter opplever du i klasserommet ved engelskundervisning?

Hvordan vurderer du din engelskkompetanse?

Har du en spesiell metode for å lære/huske nye ord?

Hvis du kunne velge, ville du valgt å bli fritatt fra engelsktimene?

Hvordan tror du dysleksi påvirker din læringsprosess?

4. Engelsk lærerens pedagogikk

Hva slags hjelp forventer du å få fra din engelsklærer?

Hva slags hjelp får du fra din lærer?

Er det noen metoder læreren din har brukt som har vært suksessfulle?

Hvilken holdning tror du engelsklæreren har mot deg? Hvordan vil læreren beskrive deg som en elev?

Hvordan tilpasser læreren undervisningen?

I hvilke situasjoner får du ros fra læreren? Hvordan påvirker det deg?

Studerer du mye hjemme? Hva trenger du mest tid til?

Hva gjør læreren for å motivere deg?

Hva slags undervisningsmetoder liker du mest/minst?

Hvordan forstiller du deg en god engelsktime?

Kan du gi et eksempel på en situasjon hvor du var veldig fornøyd med arbeidet ditt?

Hva er den minst hyggelige situasjonen du har opplevd under en engelsktime?

Synes du læreren har passende forventinger til deg? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?

Hva synes du om lærerens forklaringer og tilbakemeldinger du får?

Bruker læreren kun engelsk som språk i timene? Hender det du har problemer med å forstå hva han/hun sier?

Hvordan vil du karakterisere en god engelsklærer? Fortell meg om den beste engelsklæreren du har hatt og hva som gjorde han/hun en god lærer?

Er lærerens personlighet viktig for deg?

Hvordan ser du for deg en perfekt engelsktid?

5. Avslutningsspørsmål

Er det noe du vil fortelle meg som vi ikke har snakket om?

Er det noen spørsmål jeg burde ha spurt om, som jeg ikke har gjort?

Er det noen spørsmål jeg ikke burde ha stilt?

Hvordan var din opplevelse av å delta i intervjuet?

Appendix 12: The interview guide (English)

Before the interview

The interviewer introduces herself, presents the main goal of the study and reminds that the participation is voluntary and the interviewee can withdraw at any point without consequences. The students are asked for permission to record the conversation.

1. Introduction

Could you tell me little bit about yourself?

What do you like to do in your free time?

How would you describe yourself?

2. About dyslexia in general

When did you get diagnosis of dyslexia and how did you experience it?

How do you understand dyslexia? Who explained it to you?

What is the most positive thing about having dyslexia / and what is most negative?

3. English language learning

What is your favourite and least favourite school subject?

Do you think it is important to learn foreign language? Why? Why not?

How do you experience learning English at school?

What is most difficult in learning the English language?

What kind of difficulties do you experience in the classroom?

How do you assess your English competence?

Do you have some specific methods you use to memorize new words/ to learn spelling?

How does dyslexia affect your learning of the foreign language?

If you could choose, would you like to be exempted from attending English classes?

How do you think dyslexia affects your learning process?

4. English teacher's pedagogy

What kind of help do you expect from your English teacher?

What kind of help do you get from the teacher?

Are there some good methods the teacher uses to help you to learn successfully?

What kind of attitude do you think your English teacher has towards you? How do you think he/she teacher would describe you as a student?

How does the teacher try to adapt the teaching?

In which situations do you get praise from the teacher? How does it affect you?

Do you study a lot at home? What do you need most time with?

What does the teacher do to motivate you?

What kind of classroom activities do you like most/ least?

How do you imagine a good English lesson?

Can you give an example of situation when you were very satisfied with your work?

What was the most unpleasant situation you experienced during the English class?

Do you think your teacher has appropriate expectations towards you? Why?/Why not?

How do you assess the classroom instructions?/ feedback from the teacher?

Does the teacher use only English as a language of instruction? Do you happen to have problems with understanding what he/ she is saying and asking you to do?

How would you characterize a good English teacher? Tell me about your best English teacher and what made him a good/effective teacher?

Is the teacher's personality important to you?

How do you imagine a perfect English lesson?

5. Ending up questions

Is there something you would like to tell me about that we haven't talked about?

Is there any question I should have asked but I didn't?

Is there any question I shouldn't have asked?

How did you experience taking part in the interview?